

Emilee Moore / Claudia Vallejo (eds.)

# Learning English Out of School: An Inclusive Approach to Research and Action



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## **Learning English Out of School: An Inclusive Approach to Research and Action**

This volume reports on the main results of the research project *Inclusive epistemologies and practices of out-of-school English learning*. The study reacts to low attainment levels in English as a foreign language among socioeconomically disadvantaged youth. The contributors to this volume research teenagers' existing practices of using and learning English out of school time and implement new, inclusive, nonformal English language educational initiatives. They evaluate the impact of the nonformal English language educational initiatives implemented and support their sustainability and transferability. The project embeds collaborative and arts-based methods into its methodology, fostering inclusive and creative educational practices and ways of knowing.

### **The Editors**

Emilee Moore is an Associate Professor in the Department of Language and Literature Education and Social Science Education at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and a member of the Research Centre for Teaching and Plurilingual Interaction (GREIP). Her research is framed within the study of communicative practices in multilingual and multicultural educational contexts from a perspective that integrates linguistic anthropology, interactional sociolinguistics and sociocultural learning theories.

Claudia Vallejo is an Adjunct Lecturer in the Department of Language and Literature Education and Social Science Education at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and a member of the Research Centre for Teaching and Plurilingual Interaction (GREIP). Her research focuses on the role of cultural and linguistic diversity in the academic trajectories of students from cultural and linguistic minorities, especially those considered at risk of school failure.

**Learning English Out of School:  
An Inclusive Approach to Research and Action**

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Emilee Moore

# Introduction

## Inclusive epistemologies and practices of out-of-school English learning

**Abstract** Official indicators suggest that English as a Foreign Language is one of the school subjects that is most telling of social inequalities in Catalonia, this being the geographical and educational context where the research presented in this volume was carried out. Similar findings are reported in other areas of Europe. This monograph reports on the main findings of the research project ‘Inclusive epistemologies and practices of out-of-school English learning (IEP!)’, funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation and led by the author of this chapter, which ran from January 2019 until June 2021. The project responded to low attainment levels for English as a Foreign Language among socioeconomically disadvantaged youth in a municipality in the metropolitan area surrounding Barcelona. As part of this project, the contributors to this volume: 1) collaboratively researched teenagers’ existing practices of using and learning English out of school time; 2) implemented new, inclusive, nonformal English language educational initiatives; 3) evaluated the impact of the nonformal English language educational initiatives implemented; and 4) supported the sustainability and transferability of the initiatives. The project embedded collaborative and creative ways of working and building knowledge into its methodology, and in this sense, it aimed to contest traditional researcher-researched and logocentric hierarchies of knowledge, and to foster not only inclusive educational practices, but also inclusive epistemologies.

**Keywords:** English as a Foreign Language, out-of-school, youth, collaboration, creativity, inclusion

### 1. Introduction

All students in their fourth – and thus final – year of compulsory secondary schooling (*educació secundària obligatòria* or ESO) in Catalonia, the geographical and educational context where the research presented in this volume was carried out, sit core competences tests. These young people, who are approximately 15 years of age at the time of testing, are assessed in Science and Technology, Mathematics, Catalan, Spanish and English (English being a required subject throughout compulsory schooling, from the age of six, Catalan being the vehicular language of schooling, and Spanish being taught as a second language and/

or used as a medium of instruction in other curricular subjects). The results of this assessment of core competences reveal significant differences between young people in more and less affluent areas. According to recent data (Consell Superior d'Avaluació del Sistema Educatiu, 2019), 27 % of students at schools labelled 'high complexity' (a category used by Catalan educational authorities which is determined by indicators including low socioeconomic status and a high number of recent migrants) do not achieve the minimum required competences in English, compared with only 3.7 % of students from 'low complexity' schools. Furthermore, English is the subject area with most difference in achievement levels between students from high and low complexity schools. These results are particularly noteworthy because while the outcomes of students from high complexity schools for English are consistently low, the English results of students from low complexity schools are higher than their results for all other subjects and this is a tendency that has been sustained over the years (Consell Superior d'Avaluació del Sistema Educatiu, 2019). The data thus suggest that if there is one school subject that is especially telling of social and educational inequalities in our context, it is English. Erling et al. (2020) report similar findings for Austria, suggesting that this is not an isolated phenomenon, but rather one affecting other educational systems across Europe.

The contributors to this volume set out from a first premise that taking action to improve the competences in English of socioeconomically disadvantaged youth is a meaningful contribution towards more equitable educational outcomes and more inclusive future opportunities for them. The contributors also share the conviction that young people learn not only in schools, but also in the myriad of interactions across space and time that they encounter beyond formal education (see Moore, Vallejo, et al., this volume). Amalgamating these positions, the volume reports on the main findings of the research project 'Inclusive epistemologies and practices of out-of-school English learning (IEP!)', funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation, which ran from January 2019 until June 2021. The aims of the project were:

- 1) To collaboratively research teenagers' existing practices of using and learning English out of school time;
- 2) To implement new, inclusive, nonformal English language educational initiatives;
- 3) To evaluate the impact of the nonformal English language educational initiatives implemented;
- 4) To support the sustainability and transferability of the initiatives.

The project responded to the transversal objective of the Spanish Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy to generate knowledge that contributes to greater social welfare. It also responded to the Horizon 2020 challenge of building an inclusive Europe. By placing intersectoral cooperation – between university, schools and other educational agents – as an epistemological pillar (see Section 3 of this chapter), the project also addressed the Horizon 2020 aim of promoting effective cooperation between science and society in order to embed social awareness and responsibility into the pursuit of scientific excellence. It further responded to the Horizon 2020 vision of boosting employment, and more specifically to the European Commission's Europe 2020 recommendations that member states take actions that improve young people's competences in foreign languages as a means of boosting their domestic and international employability.

This introductory chapter continues in Section 2 by presenting the research context in more depth, drawing on some of the ethnographic data – i.e. fieldnotes and a focus group – gathered from different IEP! project sites in doing so. Following that, in Section 3, the overarching methodological approach followed in the research is introduced, although individual contributors to the volume present their specific approaches in the different empirical chapters. Finally, in Section 4, the overall organisation of the volume is presented.

## **2. The research context**

Our research was conducted in a town in the metropolitan area surrounding Barcelona, in Catalonia. The town is home to approximately 13,500 people and has an area spanning less than one square kilometre. A main feature of the town is thus its high density, with families living in rows of similarly designed apartment blocks, some as low as five stories in height, but most of which are approximately 10 to 15 floors high. All these residential tower blocks were originally constructed as public housing in the 1970s – towards the end of the Franco dictatorship – to provide accommodation for workers who mainly migrated from other parts of Spain to take up employment in the state-owned electricity or railway companies. The town plan was based on the map of the Iberian Peninsula and the Balearic Islands, and the street names are different Spanish places and landmarks. The town is bordered by two major highways from which it is separated by sound barriers installed in recent years. The following extract from fieldnotes written by Víctor Corona, one of the researchers in the IEP! project, reflect his first impressions of the municipality:

**Extract 1**

El instituto está situado muy cerca del centro de la ciudad. Está rodeado por bloques de apartamentos muy altos. Se pueden contar muchas ventanas, todas ellas muy pequeñas. [...] Salta a la vista su carácter industrial, así como su condición de ciudad dormitorio. No hay muchas zonas verdes ni parques. Tampoco es que sea demasiado grande.

*The high school is located near the centre of the city. It is surrounded by very high blocks of apartments. You can count lots of windows, all of them are very small. [...] Its industrial character stands out, as does its condition as a dormitory town. There are not many green spaces nor parks. It's also not very large.*

(Víctor Corona, 22 October, 2019)

In terms of public educational facilities, there are four primary schools, two secondary schools, a vocational training school, an adult education centre, two childcare centres, a library, a civic centre, a music school, and a youth centre. There is also one private English language academy offering after-school classes for children and teens and life-long learning courses for adults, which was attended by some of the young people we worked with as part of the IEP! project (see Corona et al., this volume). The town is located within kilometres of a major university, which acts as a hub of internationalisation, and is also surrounded by innovative business and I+D facilities, also with international projection. However, while the young people in the municipality are surrounded by a buzz of educational and professional activities that take place in English, most do not have direct associations with them (e.g. through their parents' work). While some of the young people we worked with did imagine themselves attending the university in the future, others saw themselves attending vocational training or joining armed or police forces. Disposable household income in the town is below the average for Catalonia and unemployment – especially youth unemployment – is higher than the Catalan average. Educational attainment levels are below average; for example, more than half of the students at the two high schools do not meet minimum curricular standards for English on completing their compulsory schooling.

Besides working-class families who migrated to the town in the 1970s, there is also a significant population of Catalan and Spanish gypsies, as well as more recent migrants from other parts of the globe. Spanish is the main language heard in the town and spoken by the young people who participated in IEP! research, with Catalan, the main language of formal education, being a language

that most of the youth we worked with only used at school. This is reflected in the following extract from a focus group conducted with some of the young people who took part in our research at the local youth centre, which will be introduced later in this section:

### Extract 2

EMI: Emilee (researcher), SAR (Sara, pseudonym, youth participant), DAN (Daniel, pseudonym, youth participant), ANA (Ana Li, pseudonym, youth participant), JEF (Jefferson, pseudonym, youth participant). Others are present but do not speak in the extract.

- 01 **EMI** **entonces a ver si nos podéis explicar las lenguas que se**  
*so let's see if you can explain to us the languages that are*
- 02 **hablan en (name of town)?**  
*spoken in (name of town)?*
- 03 **SAR** **el castellano.**  
*spanish.*
- 04 **DAN** **el castellano.**  
*spanish.*
- 05 **ANA** **[el castellano.]**  
*[spanish.]*
- 06 **JEF** **[el castellano] más.**  
*[spanish] mo:re.*

In line 1 of the extract, Emilee asks the youth to tell her and another IEP! researcher present (Claudia Vallejo), about the languages spoken in their town. Without hesitation, Sara answers “el castellano” (“Spanish”), which is repeated in chorus by her peers Daniel and Ana Li in the following lines. Only Jefferson, who had very recently migrated to Spain and settled in the town from Ecuador, nuances his response – “el castellano más” (“Spanish more”) – presumably because he had also encountered another language (Catalan) on arrival, both in and out of school, which he was in the early stages of learning. He would thus experience its social and educational presence and use in a different way from his peers. Finally, the very fact that the interaction between the researchers and the young people in Extract 2 takes place in Spanish is also representative of the youths’ preference for this language as their main language of socialisation. Indeed, different research in our context has shown how Catalan is often used by young people in addressing adults who they identify with educational institutions (e.g. Masats et al., 2017), which was not the case in our setting.

As for English, the following extract from an improvised focus group discussion held with a group of students at one of the two secondary schools we collaborated with as part of IEP! – introduced in the following paragraphs – is quite representative of the diversity of reasons the young people had for investing or otherwise in learning this language (see also Corona et al., this volume). The extract begins in lines 1 to 2 with the researcher asking the students why they want English or to learn English. Their English teacher, Almudena Herrera, was also part of the discussion.

### Extract 3

EMI: Emilee (researcher), ALM: Almudena (English teacher), S01, S02, etc. (unidentified students)

- 01 EMI para que queréis el inglés. (.) para que queréis aprender  
 02 inglés?  
*why do you want english. (.) why do you want to learn english?*
- 03 S03 porque si yo [( )  
*because if i [( )*
- 04 S01 [para viajar.  
*[to travel.*
- 05 S10 [para los turistas. (.) para los turistas.  
*[for tourists. (.) for tourists.*
- 06 S06 [para poder leer mangas que no estén subtítulos.  
*[to be able to read mangas that are not subtitled.*
- 07 S09 me quiero ir a estudiar a la universidad.  
*i want to go to study at university.*
- 08 S02 para entender a los ingleses.  
*to understand english people.*
- 09 S06 yo para que quiero el inglés? (.) para leer mangas que no están  
 10 subtítulos en inglés por- o sea en español porque me da mucha  
 11 rabia tener que buscarlo en el traductor.  
*why do i want english? (.) to read mangas that are not  
 subtitled in english for- i mean in spanish because it irritates  
 me to have to search in the translator.*
- 12 ALM vale.  
*ok.*
- 13 ((excerpt not transcribed))
- 14 S02 yo para que mi madre esté contenta.  
*me so that my mother is happy.*

- 15 S07 **vamos si me piro de casa allí:** ( )  
*come on if i leave home there:* ( )
- 16 S08 **supongo que para conseguir algún trabajo.**  
*i suppose that to get some job.*

In response to the researcher's question, the students provide multiple reasons for learning English. These include wanting to be able to read manga comics that are not translated into Spanish, to travel and to understand tourists, go to university and get a job. Indeed, the young people we worked with as part of IEP! were far from homogenous in terms of their personal and academic interests or their future aspirations, and this diversity is reflected in the responses they provide in Extract 3. Similar to findings from previous research in Catalonia with adolescents (Garrido & Moore, 2016) and pre-service teachers (Birello et al., 2020), some of the young people appropriate the common-sense discourse, which circulates in European and national policies and recommendations, in schools and in society, that learning foreign languages, and especially English, is useful for future employment and international exchanges (see also Flors Mas, 2013; Pérez-Milans & Patiño-Santos, 2014; Patiño-Santos & Codó, 2021). It is important to note, as was explained in the first section of this introduction, that this common-sense discourse about the future utility of English for youth was also part of the justification for the IEP! project. However, some young people also orient to the utility of English in the present for engaging in activities for pleasure, a point that is developed further in several of the chapters that make up this volume (see Corona et al., this volume; Moore, Deal, et al., this volume; Pratginestós & Masats, this volume). These chapters show how the emotional experience of using and learning English in young people's presents may be harnessed for supporting their foreign language learning in school.

As has been alluded to in presenting the different data extracts in this chapter, IEP! research took place at different sites in the town at the focus of our work. On the one hand, some of the research took place in, or in direct collaboration with, the two secondary schools. This is the case of the research presented, firstly, by Corona et al. (this volume), who study the video productions of youth who reflect on the importance of English in their lives as part of a project set by their English teacher. It is also the case of the research by Pratginestós and Masats (this volume), who investigate the spontaneous use of social media as a tool for learning English following a translocal project conducted with English learners from two secondary schools located in Catalonia and in Greece. Finally,

the chapter by Moore, Deal et al. (this volume) explores how supposedly inauthentic language input is transformed into a real, embodied, aesthetic and emotional learning experience by youth participants in a nonformal drama activity organised by an English teacher at one of the secondary schools.

On the other hand, the volume includes research carried out at the youth centre, where IEP! researchers set up and ran a site for the Global StoryBridges (GSB)<sup>1</sup> project. This is the case of the chapters by Zhang and Llompart (this volume), who explore young people's multimodal and plurilingual construction of linguistic mediation activities, and by Moore and Hawkins (this volume), who study the affordances of an arts-based method for learning at the Catalan site. Working across sites allowed us to observe and accompany the young people in different contexts of language use and language learning; indeed, some of the youth participants in the data presented in different chapters are the same.

In the following section, the methodological approach guiding the IEP! project is introduced.

### 3. Methodological approach

The researchers who participated in the IEP! research project were fortunate in the sense that we did not start from nothing. IEP! began in 2019, but it emerged from an intersectoral alliance established previously in 2016. The alliance was led by our university's outreach office – Fundació Autònoma Solidària – and it involved English teachers and head teachers from the town's two secondary schools, members of the local council, the Catalan Education Department and university researchers/teacher educators. Since 2016, action had been taken to implement and research innovations in English language teaching in formal education supported by a different research project which complements the work done as part of IEP!: 'Teachers as agents of transformation through their engagement in cross disciplinary innovative projects in the English classrooms (DATE)<sup>2</sup>', led by Dolors Masats, who is also a contributor to this volume. The IEP! project built on the network, familiarity

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- 1 Global StoryBridges (GSB) is coordinated globally by Margaret R. Hawkins, a contributor to this volume. GSB works in different global sites as an extracurricular program in which youth collectively produce video stories representing different aspects of their lives. These videos, which use English as a lingua franca, are shared and commented on the project's web-based platform. See: <http://www.globalstorybridges.com/>
  - 2 Funded by a RecerCaixa grant, reference: 2016-ACUP-001.

with and access to the youth and other relevant social actors and spaces established through this intersectoral alliance and the DATE project. However, IEP! focused on the youths' existing practices and opportunities for out-of-school learning of English and on the collaborative implementation of new out-of-school English learning activities with and for them, as well as on the measurement of the impact of these innovations on young people's learning. It should be noted that by 'out-of-school' we refer to school hours, not necessarily to school spaces. Furthermore, it is important to clarify that the lines between school and out-of-school learning are not always easy to draw. Coherent with current thinking – for example the 'Educació360: Educació a temps complet' ('Education360: Full time education', see Fundació Jaume Bofill, n.d.) initiative in our context – we consider these contexts to be intrinsically connected in what should be considered a continuum of complementary learning spaces and times, although often "learning activities that take place in and out of school are [...] not mutually recognized" (Subero et al., 2017, p. 247).

In the remainder of this section, the main methodological influences of the IEP! project are highlighted. On the one hand, in order to respond to the objectives of documenting and comparing existing practices and opportunities for out-of-school learning of English, the project was conceptualised as a comparative case study (CCS), with the 'case' being built through a process of collaborative, multi-sited ethnography. On the other, in order to generate and sustain new opportunities for young people to learn English out of school, and to support lasting connections between school and out-of-school learning, the project used a transformative activist approach, incorporating university student volunteerism, collaborative action-research with teachers, reflective practice and youth-led participatory action-research. In addition, the project aimed to measure the impact of the actions taken on the youth participants' learning of English, for which sociointeractionist approaches to learning predominate in the different contributions to the volume, in combination with other sociocultural perspectives. Threading through all these approaches, as a transversal methodological contribution, the project draws on creative inquiry, or arts-based methods. The title of the project refers to inclusive epistemologies, and it is precisely by embedding collaborative and creative ways of knowing that the project aims to contest traditional researcher-researched and logocentric hierarchies of knowledge.

### **3.1 Comparative case study and collaborative, multi-sited and multi-scalar ethnography**

One of the main methodological contributions that inspired the IEP! project was that of comparative case study (CCS), as described by Bartlett and Vavrus (2017). Unlike other types of case study research, CCS is a heuristic approach based on emergent case design. The aim is to understand how different aspects relevant to the phenomena under study surface in possibly unpredictable ways across different spaces and times and involving different social actors. The perspective of the social actors who participate in the study thereby become central to the eventual definition of the case. Indeed CCS, and the IEP! project specifically, draw heavily on collaborative forms of ethnography (Lassiter, 2005). Such collaborative ethnography includes not only traditional ethnographic methods such as participant-observation and the collection of multiple types of data in the form of fieldnotes, recordings of interviews, focus groups and naturally-occurring encounters, etc., but also the co-collection, co-interpretation and co-writing of ethnographic texts. Coherent with this approach, this volume includes two chapters which are co-authored by university-based researchers and the secondary school English teachers with whom we worked (see Corona et al., this volume; Moore, Deal et al, this volume). CCS also involves constant comparison between what is emerging in one place and at one time with what is happening at other sites, as well as considering other relevant contemporary and historical processes. In this sense, Bartlett and Vavrus establish parallels between the comparative case study approach and multi-sited and multi-scalar ethnography (e.g. Blackledge & Creese, 2010). In Section 2 of this chapter, the different research sites, and thus the different spaces and times of language use and learning considered by the contributors, were introduced. Catalan, Spanish and international research on out-of-school (language) learning in other socioeconomically disadvantaged settings also illuminated the case study as it developed. Policies and reports on school and out-of-school (language) education and uses of leisure time were also considered. A review of this research and policy is presented in the chapter by Moore, Vallejo et al. (this volume).

### **3.2 Transformative activist research, collaborative action-research and reflective practice**

In the IEP! project, a transformative activist stance (TAS, see Vianna & Stetsenko, 2014) was taken, in the sense that the research not only aimed to understand existing realities and the ways that people adapt to them, but also to collaboratively enact change. From a TAS:

development and learning are collaborative achievements of an activist nature that are not confined to adapting to what is 'given' in the world. Instead, these processes rely upon people forming and carrying out future-oriented agendas within collaborative projects of social transformation. These agendas centrally involve taking an activist stance grounded in a vision, or 'endpoint,' of how community members believe present practices can be changed and what kind of future ought to be created. (Vianna & Stetsenko, 2014, pp. 575–576)

This stance was materialised in IEP! in two ways: on the one hand, the research sought to help build new, inclusive and sustainable opportunities for the youth participants' out-of-school learning of English, drawing on already established intersectoral partnerships. Our work in setting up the Global StoryBridges site at the local youth centre, or in working with the English teachers at the schools, was guided by our imaginations of what students' opportunities for learning English could be like. On the other hand, the research incorporated university student volunteerism, with the Global StoryBridges site being co-facilitated by university student volunteers. This was coherent with our understanding that in order to build a more inclusive society, the more 'allies' the better.

The IEP! project was further guided by principles of collaborative action-research with teachers (Nussbaum, 2017). As Nussbaum explains:

Research in schools [...] entails a long journey of mutual recognition and trust between the researchers and the teaching staff, and a negotiation of give-and-take. In our experience, the most effective reward for both parties is engaging in a mutually satisfying project in which both the researchers and the teachers occupy complementary spaces – rather than asymmetrical ones – to collaboratively build educational knowledge. For external research teams working in a school, this option represents an excellent opportunity to acquire educational experience, to compare theory and practice, and as a source of inspiration for future investigations. For teachers, it offers a chance to share their professional concerns with colleagues who can help them to reflect upon them, as well as the reward of being a collaborative participant in building didactic knowledge and disseminating it jointly. (p. 47)

The research presented in the chapters by Corona et al. (this volume), Moore, Deal et al. (this volume) and Pratinestós and Masats (this volume) are examples of this collaborative action-research. In all these studies, teams of university-based researchers and secondary school teachers worked together to set up and reflect on activities to support young people's learning of English. Closely related to such collaborative action-research, researchers in IEP! were also inspired by the principles of reflective practice (e.g. Schön, 1983; Eraut, 1995), specifically in the case of the research presented in Moore and Hawkins (this volume) and Zhang and Llompart (this volume). In these cases, the authors took on the

dual role of researchers and educators and reflect on the lessons learned from experience.

### **3.3. Youth-led participatory action-research**

IEP! was also inspired by youth-led participatory action-research (YPAR, Ozer et al., 2010), an inclusive epistemological approach designed to support youth participants' self-determination and redistribute power between youth and adults, which has proved effective in other out-of-school research contexts (Anyon et al., 2018). The YPAR process involves different stages, supported by adults, including: 1) young people engaging in initial explorations of the issue and gaining training and hands-on experience in research methods allowing in-depth study of it; 2) young people participating in data collection about the issue, in collaboration with different stakeholders; 3) young people thinking strategically about how to create social change by building alliances with different stakeholders; 4) youth participating in the implementation and evaluation of changes (Anyon, et al., 2018). The YPAR approach was at the base of the research presented in Corona et al. (this volume), which represents the first step – initial explorations of the issue of the young people's learning of English – of what was intended as a YPAR process. The aim was also to promote YPAR in the Global StoryBridges activity run at the youth centre reported on in the chapters by Moore and Hawkins (this volume) and Zhang and Llompart (this volume); indeed, one of the guiding philosophies of Global StoryBridges is that it be youth-led. However, our intentions to promote YPAR at these two sites – a secondary school and the GSB site – were frustrated as the COVID-19 pandemic and a hard national lockdown from March 2020 meant a rapid switch to remote schooling and the suspension of our fieldwork. As we discuss in Moore and Morodo (this volume), this is a pending challenge for future research.

### **3.4. Creative inquiry and arts-based epistemologies**

Creative inquiry sets out from the premise that in order to deal with contemporary issues, more than new knowledge is needed. Rather, new *ways of knowing* are at stake. In its simplest sense, creative inquiry involves the use of arts-based practices – painting, drawing, photography, collage, drama, music, creative writing, etc. – as methods of research. This is the perspective that is reflected in Leavy's definition of creative inquiry as “any social research or human inquiry that adapts the tenets of the creative arts as a part of the methodology” (cited in Jones & Leavy, 2014, p. 1). Arts-based methods have proved effective in language

education research as a means for young people to explore their realities and imaginations in ways that extend beyond written and spoken expression, which is typical of much research data collection. There is also increasing interest in how arts-based and ethnographic methods relate and complement each other, particularly in educational research (see Ferro & Poveda, 2019). Arts-based methods have been used previously in researching different aspects of language education by IEP! team members, who have used collage, drawing, drama, film-production or music in pushing epistemological boundaries (e.g. Ambrós & Masats, 2011; Bradley et al., 2018; Bradley & Moore, 2018; Garrido & Moore, 2016; Llompарт, 2016; Masats & Unamuno, 2011).

Bradley and Harvey (2019) offer a broader understanding of this emergent field, establishing three categories of research engaging with creative inquiry in applied linguistics. On the one hand, they discuss research that is conducted *through* the arts; that is, by using arts-based and arts-informed methods, which corresponds with Leavy's definition of creative inquiry. This is the approach taken in two of the contributions to this volume. Corona et al. (this volume) used a video-production activity to gather information about teenagers' use and learning of English. Moore and Hawkins (this volume) consider the impact of a handicraft activity on a learning ecology. Research *with* the arts focuses on what the arts can inform us about language. Here, the arts may be considered as objects of analysis from which questions and concepts about language can emerge. This would be the case of the research by Moore, Deal et al. (this volume), who study students' interaction as part of a drama activity and consider what their drama practice can tell us about their understandings of language use and language learning. Finally, Bradley and Harvey discuss research *into* the arts using applied linguistics methods, the focus of which are creative and artistic practices themselves, contexts and collaborations.

### 3.5. Sociocultural approaches to learning

In terms of researching learning, the chapters that make up this volume are inspired by different theoretical and methodological approaches, all of which are of a sociocultural nature (see Hawkins, 2010). Sociocultural approaches to learning include contributions from sociocultural psychology, linguistic anthropology, ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, among other traditions. Learning is conceptualised as a process that has its genesis, its means and its ends in communicative practices that are embedded in the sociocultural environment.

The chapter by Corona et al. (this volume) takes a language socialisation approach (Duranti et al., 2011), which originated in linguistic anthropology, to

account for the ways that language use and learning relate to processes of gaining community membership. Language socialisation approaches to learning help illuminate, for example, processes of identity building, of inclusion and exclusion, or the social representations that emerge in language-mediated learning trajectories. In the case of the research presented by Corona et al (this volume), the ‘communities’ that learners belong to are non-tangible ones of YouTubers and Instagrammers, and so these authors also draw on the notion of imagined communities. This notion was introduced into sociocultural theories of language learning by Norton and her colleagues (Norton, 2001; Kanno & Norton, 2003), and refers to “groups of people, not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of the imagination” (Kanno & Norton, 2003, p. 241).

Moore and Hawkins (this volume) take an ecological approach (Hawkins, 2004; van Lier, 2004) to learning, to consider how young people’s identities, histories, linguistic repertoires and uses, embodied resources, participant roles, as well as digital artefacts, literacies, etc., all combine in an ecosystem that might afford different opportunities for learning. As Hawkins (2004) writes, ecosystems involve:

a fragile balance, and in order for it to ‘work’ – to have the inhabitant life forms survive and prosper – we need to understand not only the individual components, but also the ways in which the patterns and the ebb and flow of contacts and engagements result from and contribute to the whole. (p. 21)

In seeking to understand these ebbs and flows, Moore and Hawkins (this volume) further draw on the anthropological approach to cognition and learning “as a public, social process embedded within an historically shaped material world” (Goodwin, 2000, p. 1491), an approach which is also developed in the contribution by Moore, Deal et al. (this volume).

The chapters by Moore, Deal et al (this volume), Moore and Hawkins (this volume), Pratinestós and Masats (this volume), and Zhang and Llompart (this volume), also integrate conversation analytical perspectives on cognition and learning in their framing. Since its beginnings, ethnomethodology – the tradition in which conversation analysis has its roots – has explored the procedures through which knowledge is displayed, acquired, confirmed and modified by people in everyday social actions. According to Kasper (2008), ethnomethodologists contribute two insights for understanding the relationship between social interaction and cognitive processes, including learning, “by emphasising that the knowledge that people draw on in the concerted management of their situated activities is always embedded in and arises from practical exigencies” (p. 61). The first of

the insights contributed by ethnomethodology is the redefinition of objects that have traditionally been treated as individual mechanisms in the psychological programme – such as memory, perception and learning – as activities that are intrinsically social, occasioned and deployed by people for practical purposes. The second “treats all cognitive properties of persons as embedded within, and thereby available from, their situated communicative and other forms of activities” (Coulter, 1991, p. 189). Although ethnomethodology and conversation analysis are reticent to using external models – including learning theories – for understanding situated interaction, authors including Mondada and Pekarek Doehler (2004) provide support for the complementarity of sociocultural theories and conversation analytical methods for understanding situated second language learning processes, in what they call a strong sociointeractionist perspective (Mondada & Pekarek Doehler, 2004). The interactions studied in the chapter by Moore, Deal et al. (this volume) – who focus on young people’s rehearsals of a play – are face-to-face ones. On the other hand, the chapters by Zhang and Llompart (this one) as well as Pratginestós and Masats (this volume) involve digitally-mediated interaction. Zhang and Llompart focus on linguistic mediation activities involving human and non-human (i.e. a computer translator) interactional participants, while Pratginestós and Masats analyse young people’s interactions in Instagram chats.

Finally, the research by Moore, Deal et al. (this volume) focuses explicitly on aesthetic and emotional dimensions of language learning, an approach that is also implicit in the contribution by Corona et al. (this volume). The emotional dimensions of language learning have been well studied in sociocultural theory (e.g. Kramsch, 2009). Moore, Deal et al. (this volume) develop this work further by drawing on Piazzoli’s (2019) approach to teaching and learning as artistic processes that “involve not only cognition, but also affect, imagery, sensation, different forms of memory, emotion and embodiment” (Piazzoli, 2019, p. 8).

#### **4. Organisation of the volume**

The volume is structured as follows. In Chapter 2, by Moore, Vallejo, et al., an overview of local and international research and policy on nonformal and informal language learning is presented. The following two chapters, by Corona, et al. (Chapter 3) and Pratginestós and Masats (Chapter 4), focus on students’ informal language use and learning. The following three chapters, by Moore and Hawkins (Chapter 5), Zhang and Llompart (Chapter 6) and Moore, Deal et al. (Chapter 7) explore language use and learning in nonformal educational

settings. Finally, Chapter 8, by Moore and Morodo, offers some final reflections on the IEP! project.

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Emilee Moore / Claudia Vallejo / Melinda Dooly / Eulàlia Borràs

## Out-of-school language learning and educational equity

**Abstract** This chapter explores existing scholarship on out-of-school learning at both a local (Catalan) and an international level. We particularly focus on research that documents foreign language learning and literacy development in both informal and nonformal education across diverse socioeconomic, linguistic and cultural contexts. Research shows that access to extracurricular initiatives and opportunities to engage in informal language learning can positively impact upon formal academic achievement and future professional trajectories, especially for economically under-resourced students, and thus can play a significant role in tackling socioeducational inequalities. These positive effects are enhanced when out-of-school initiatives focus on students' competences and build on their linguistic and cultural funds of knowledge to include their everyday communicative practices. However, while offer of and demand for out-of-school learning – and particularly of foreign language learning – have increased in recent years, so too have inequalities in participation between more and less affluent families, in part due to economic burdens such as access fees, and to public restraints on funding and scholarships.

**Keywords:** nonformal language learning, informal language learning, formal schooling, socioeconomic inequalities, children and youth

### 1. Introduction

The IEP! project was inspired by existing research on nonformal and informal foreign language learning, as well as by related research on community-based extracurricular programmes, particularly those focusing on literacy, in contexts of sociolinguistic and socioeconomic diversity. In this chapter, we present a review of the literature that informed our research. The review is organised as follows: in Section 2, we present an overview of what is known about out-of-school activities and socioeducational inequalities, with a particular focus on the geographical context of our research (i.e. Catalonia). In the third section, we discuss relevant local and international research on nonformal language education, including nonformal foreign language education, for children and youth. The fourth section focuses on research about children's and youths' informal language learning, and their informal foreign language learning in particular.

The final section discusses the implications of research on nonformal and informal language learning for mainstream education.

Before continuing, it is important to clarify the terminology used. Following authors including González Motos (2016) or Sundqvist (2009), we use the terms ‘nonformal’ or ‘extracurricular’ to refer to the broad range of organised activities with educational aims that young people take part in outside of formal education, with formal being considered that “which takes place in educational centres, with a defined organisational structure and schedules, and clear learning objectives with exams and tests to validate results” (González Motos, 2016, p. 4). Our work is also concerned with ‘informal’ learning, which we differentiate as non-organised activities that young people undertake mainly for leisure rather than for learning, but which have incidental educational value. We refer to ‘after-school’ or ‘out-of-school’ learning as umbrella terms for both these uses of non-school time, which may or may not involve the use of school spaces.

## **2. Out-of-school activities and socioeducational inequalities**

In Catalonia, where our research was carried out, extracurricular activities are a common part of the daily lives of many school-aged children and youth. The Government of Catalonia’s Department of Health gathers data annually about the participation of under 15-year-olds in organised sporting and nonsporting activities, as well as other leisure time activities. These data are the main source of statistical information available to us. According to the most recent report published (Departament de Salut, 2015), 35 % of 3- to 14-year-olds (31.2 % of boys and 39.4 % of girls) take part in organised nonsporting activities (e.g. musical and artistic activities, language learning activities) outside of school hours, while 62 % (64.7 % of boys and 59.1 % of girls) participate in organised sports. Furthermore, 40.6 % (47.7 % of boys and 33.3 % of girls) of 3- to 14-year-olds partake in digitally-mediated leisure activities (e.g. watch television, play video or computer games, use the Internet) for more than two hours per day.

Regarding the influence of socioeconomic and socioeducational factors on the types of educational and noneducational after-school activities that young people do, sedentary spare time activities such as watching television and using computers are more prevalent in less affluent sectors of the population, and increase with age. Sedentary activities are especially prevalent among children and youth whose mothers have had the least schooling, and rates of sedentary activities increase with children’s and young people’s ages (Departament de Salut, 2014). Furthermore, as the Catalan ombudsmen highlights in a report reflecting on children’s and youths’ use of leisure time, participation in organised

extracurricular activities is conditioned by socioeconomic and socioeducational inequalities, with young people from less affluent and less schooled families being less likely to be involved in nonformal education (Sindic de Greuges, 2014). In a similar reflection on the Department of Health data, González Motos (2016) notes that “those who participate most [in nonformal education] are those with least educational needs, and on whom – according to the evidence reviewed – the impact of after-school activities is lowest” (p. 17). Indeed, as González Motos (2016) highlights, access to after-school educational opportunities is determined to a large extent by the need to pay fees, as well as by parents’ access to information about available programmes and their understanding of enrolment procedures.

In related research, Llopart et al. (2016) investigated the types of organised extracurricular activities that Catalan children and youth participate in, taking into account their families’ socioeconomic status, as well as who (e.g. their schools, their families) and what motivated their participation in the activities. These authors suggest – while also highlighting the need for more in-depth qualitative research before making any conclusions – that middle and upper-class families give greater importance to a broader range of activities and more actively promote their offsprings’ participation in them. Among families of lower socioeconomic status, according to Llopart et al.’s research, there exists less awareness about the after-school activities engaged in by their children. The after-school activities that are most prevalent among lower-class children and youth are practicing sport, music and spending time in libraries. Furthermore, the extracurricular activities that less affluent children and young people take part in tend to be organised by their schools or by community organisations, rather than being private initiatives.

González Motos (2016) also discusses the social and educational purposes that nonformal education fills, referring to an international research review by Lauer et al. (2004). These purposes include supporting families by increasing the amount of time that children and young people are supervised by adults outside of their homes; extending the time available for students’ learning beyond the hours of formal schooling; and compensating for educational disadvantages experienced by certain children and young people who are struggling academically at school, or in terms of social skills, values or attitudes. In this sense, González Motos (2016) warns that after-school activities have the potential to reduce social and educational inequalities, or to reproduce and even increase them if access is not equitable. Along similar lines, the 2020 Eurydice report (EACEA, 2020) found that there is considerable variation across the European Union regarding the “amount of free or subsidised additional activities in

schools outside the normal school day, despite the potential of such measures” (p. 199). This variation is worrisome considering that, as the report states, there are indicators that “additional activities in schools can make a significant contribution [...] and can compensate for the lack of resources in families from low socio-economic backgrounds” (EACEA, 2020, p. 199).

Similarly, Carbonell (2015) (see also Llopart et al., 2016) describes how both the supply and demand for nonformal learning activities has increased in recent times in Catalonia, especially in programmes focusing on music, languages (and English in particular) and sport, at the same time as there has been a rise in the socioeconomic inequalities that affect children’s and youths’ access to them. Carbonell (2016) writes:

Educational opportunities outside of school have grown. However, since the financial crisis, there has also been an increase in social inequalities that further hinder access to nonschool educational activities for young people and families with fewer economic, social and cultural resources, both during the school year and in summer vacations, despite efforts made by some local councils and nonprofit organisations. (p. 6, our translation).

Writing from the USA, Snellman et al., (2015) also claim that income-based differences in extracurricular participation are increasing and more worrisome, with these differences greatly affecting future outcomes for children and youth. It can be assumed that COVID-19, and the subsequent downward economic turn and financial vulnerability that many experts are predicting as a consequence, will only exacerbate these differences (Martin et al., 2020; Midões & Seré, 2021). This is already evident short-term; “Students from less advantaged backgrounds are likely to experience a larger decline in learning compared to their more advantaged counterparts” (Di Pietro et al., 2020, p. 28). Basing their conclusions on a report on the impact of a long-term teacher strike in Argentina, the authors of the same EU-commissioned report predict a detrimental impact on “later educational outcomes as well as future labour market performance” (Di Pietro et al., 2020, p. 29).

In an EU report that studied 14 countries’ policies and practices impacting on reducing social and educational inequality, with a particular focus on linguistic minority students, Dooly and Vallejo (2009) found sufficient examples of locally and nationally initiated out-of-school language and cultural programmes to conclude that supporting extracurricular learning is a promising approach worth exploring further. Examples included programmes that involved professional mentors for youth at risk, aimed at informing, orienting and providing training for young individuals showing interest (implemented in several EU

countries); other examples aimed to provide school support and leisure activities that included family members (e.g. *Kannersnacht* in Luxembourg; ‘Reading with parents’ or the ‘Time out project’ for older students in the Netherlands).

In the following section of this chapter we review research on nonformal language learning that has been influential to our IEP! work. We include research that is specific to foreign languages as well as research on extracurricular programmes targeting literacy, a field which has been studied much more extensively.

### 3. Young people’s nonformal language learning

Research from different traditions within the broad field of foreign language teaching and learning suggests that engaging with foreign languages outside of classrooms has a positive impact on learners’ emerging language competences. In his review of research on language learning beyond formal classroom instruction – i.e. through informal and nonformal exposure and opportunities to practice language – Benson (2011) writes that:

While the jury remains out on the effectiveness of language instruction, the wise language learner might be well advised to seek out a combination of instruction and exposure to language input [...] as well as opportunities to produce language output [...]. (p. 7)

Benson further emphasises that there is a lack of research on foreign language learning beyond formal instructional settings, with existing research producing inconclusive results about the effectiveness of different types of out-of-school (i.e. nonformal and informal) activities that learners engage in. While calling for more research to fill the gap, he concludes that:

While the jury also remains undecided on the effectiveness of out-of-class learning, the wise learner will, again, be well-advised to adopt the view that classroom and out-of-class learning are equally important. (2011, p. 7)

In one of the few studies on nonformal foreign language learning conducted in the Spanish context, Corpas Arellano (2014) examines teenagers’ participation in extracurricular activities for learning English, the frequency of this participation and the impact on students’ performance in the school English subject. The students participating in her study were in the fourth year of compulsory secondary schooling (15-years-old) at three middle-class public schools in Andalusia, Spain. Corpas Arellano’s research showed that a significant number (over 40 %) of the secondary school students in the schools studied were enrolled in some type of nonformal activity to support or enrich their school

English lessons, including attending private language colleges, private tutoring, or attending summer camps abroad, all of which the author claims had a positive impact on the teenagers' English learning at school. Furthermore, although it is not a focus of her research, Corpus Arellano hints at certain inequalities in terms of students' access to such nonformal learning opportunities, highlighting economic barriers to participation in them which have been exacerbated by the 2008 financial crisis in Spain and cuts to government scholarships supporting students' out-of-school foreign language learning.

In their study on English language learning by teenagers (mean age 15.6 years) in Madrid, Spain, Shepard and Ainsworth (2017) found that 30 % of students consulted reported studying English outside of school. Of these, 42.8 % reported attending group classes at an after-school English language college; 12.4 % attended private classes at an English language college; 27 % reported studying English with a one-to-one tutor; 11.4 % practiced English on their own using the internet; and 6.4 % reported learning on their own using print materials. Shepard and Ainsworth also report that students who study English outside of school spend between two to four hours a week doing so, with the largest proportion of them (41.1 %) indicating they studied English for two hours each week in addition to the time spent in English class as part of their formal schooling. These authors consider the impact of students' socioeconomic status on different aspects of their English language learning, finding that more affluent students were more motivated, which the authors link in part to access to private education, extra classes and language learning materials.

While research on nonformal foreign language learning specifically is quite scarce, there is a large and informative body of research on out-of-school literacy programmes supporting children's and youths' learning of their schools' main languages of instruction, from Catalonia, Spain and from abroad. This research suggests that while from a critical perspective nonformal education takes some of the onus of students' learning away from schools and may be seen as punishment by learners, certain out-of-school programmes are beneficial in that they offer an "unusually heterogeneous distribution of knowledge and skill" (Cole, 1996, p. 298) in comparison with mainstream classrooms (Cole & The Distributed Literacy Consortium, 2006). It has been argued, furthermore, that in nonformal education external pressures on learners are lower and adult agendas are more modest than in schools (Spielberger & Halpern, 2002). Some of the international research on nonformal education has explored aspects such as the organisation of programme sessions and the profile of the adult tutors involved, concluding that less structured initiatives and with less-trained tutors yield poorer results, especially when targeting learners facing socioeconomic

hardship (Allor & McCathren, 2004). Other research in community-based educational programmes has described the importance of the relational and identity aspects supported by them (Lee & Hawkins, 2008; Vallejo, 2020b). Several studies linked to the Fifth Dimension project in the USA (Cole, 1996; Cole & The Distributed Literacy Consortium, 2006) and the associated La Clase Mágica project conducted in the USA and Spain (Vázquez, 2003; Macías Gómez-Estern & Vázquez, 2015) have shown how collaborative interactional contexts built among children, youth and adult participants, as well as with broader communities, are beneficial to learning. In the context of Catalonia, the Casa de Shere Rom project (Crespo et al., 1999; Crespo et al., 2005), which was inspired by the Fifth Dimension and La Clase Mágica, built a learning community made up of researchers, Roma educators, children and adolescents on the marginalised outskirts of Barcelona. The project favoured the educational integration of the participating students, and in particular, their development of digital literacies.

In the following section, we focus on research on young people's informal language learning.

#### **4. Young people's informal language learning**

The results presented in Section 2 of this chapter from the Catalan Department of Health's survey on under 15-year-olds' use of their out-of-school time show that activities such as watching television and using computers are commonplace. The literature on children's and youths' informal language learning suggests that some of this digitally-mediated time might offer educational affordances. For example, in their survey on English language learning by teenagers in Madrid, Shepard and Ainsworth (2017) found that 43.9 % of their sample interacted with computer games in English (56.4 % of whom were boys and 43.6 % of whom were girls); 25.3 % used English on social media (56.9 % of whom were girls and 43.6 % of whom were boys); 22.8 % reported using English for surfing the internet (53 % of whom were girls and 47 % of whom were boys); and 21.2 % used English to watch films (66.2 % of whom were girls and 33.8 % of whom were boys). Fewer than 10 % of the consulted students reported using English for watching television or listening to the radio, and fewer than 5 % used English for reading print material.

In research with a similar focus, Muñoz (2020) documented the types of contact with English that learners in Catalonia have outside their school classrooms, exploring age and gender differences and examining the relationship between out-of-school contact with English and school English grades. In line with other international studies cited by the author, listening to songs is most prevalent

among the activities engaged in by the participants in English, followed by watching videos on YouTube, reading on the internet, writing on the internet, playing videogames and watching movies in English subtitled into Catalan or Spanish. In terms of age and gender differences, Muñoz (2020) writes:

In summary, the typical viewers of audiovisual input are female and their viewing frequency increases with age; gamers are male and adolescent; frequent readers are older than nonfrequent readers and female; listeners to music are adolescent and female; and talkers are female. As for the profile of those who engage in online activities, they are more generally older adolescents; and readers on the Internet are typically female. (p. 191)

Regarding the association between out-of-school exposure to English and students' school English grades, Muñoz found that all activities except for gaming had a positive impact on learners' school performance, leading her to conclude that less academically-oriented students engaged more frequently in gaming than their peers.

Sundqvist (2009) studied the effects of what she calls extramural English – i.e. informal language activities using English that learners participate in beyond classrooms, in their spare time – on the development of oral proficiency and vocabulary knowledge amongst teenagers in Sweden. Her results show that engagement in informal activities in English beyond classrooms has a positive impact on learners' foreign language competences, although she concludes that the type of activity engaged in needs to be taken into consideration. Activities requiring learners to be more linguistically active (e.g. video gaming, searching the internet, reading) have a greater impact, according to Sundqvist, on their language learning, than those in which they remain more passive (e.g. listening to music, or watching TV or films). Olsson (2011) conducted an analogous study to Sundqvist's, also with Swedish teenagers, and reached similar conclusions, claiming that extramural activities in English also promote learners' competences as writers in that language. Sundqvist's (2009) research also accounts for different background variables of learners and concludes that taking into account learners' extramural uses of English is of particular relevance when considering the development of language competences by learners from different socio-economic backgrounds.

Similar to Sundqvist's and Olsson's findings, Dooly (2017, para. 18) also highlights the growing importance of young people's informal use of social media and other digital resources for their English language learning, with a particular focus on learners' identity construction. Dooly (2017) argues that youthful users of technology must be understood as agentive social actors

and fully acknowledges “the inherent complexity of participants, context and the numerous other human and social factors involved in the learning process” that includes nonformal use of technology (para. 5). Not all young people access and use technology in the same way and their learning ecology bridges home, school, work and community, in both on and offline activities, having a subsequent impact on their construction of self-identity. Children and youth learn to perform appropriately both on and offline relative to different audiences (Dooly, 2017) and as the world becomes more technologised, unequal access to this technology implies that these groups will be less prepared to manage the technological demands of society. Referring to this digital gap, Katz et al. (2017) indicate that it can have a significant negative impact on the educational attainment of socioeconomically disadvantaged children and youth. This may be even more so with children and youth whose predominant languages are less prevalently available on the internet and in digital support platforms (Ortega, 2017).

Finally, bridging nonformal and informal language learning, Garrido and Moore (2016) report on English language workshops they ran as part of a summer holiday programme for secondary school students at a Catalan university. The workshops aimed to develop learners’ plurilingual repertoires through writing and performing raps on the theme of the teenagers’ language biographies. The authors analyse the audiovisual output of the sessions: raps in the learners’ English, which also include other linguistic resources from their developing repertoires. They show how the rap activity allows the students to produce critical and reflexive accounts of their language use and language learning experiences, at the same time as the language of Hip Hop, which is part of the repertoire of many of the students and which has been learned informally, supports their productions in English.

In the following section of the chapter, we consider research exploring discontinuities and connections between school and nonschool learning.

## **5. Implications for educational action**

Disconnections between students’ out-of-school and in-school learning have been well documented in the literature, which also offers ways forward for educational action. Sundqvist and Olin-Scheller (2013), for example, claim that in mainstream secondary school classrooms in Sweden, learners’ extramural knowledge of English is not well understood nor acknowledged, nor is it generally used as a teaching and learning resource, contributing to students’ demotivation for learning English at school. These researchers’ experience,

however, suggests that teacher development initiatives can be implemented to help to bridge this gap. The persistent need to promote not only equitable access to out-of-school learning opportunities but also to establish meaningful connections between formal and nonformal education is also at the basis of the 'Educació360: Educació a temps complet' (Education360: Full time education) initiative in Catalonia (Fundació Jaume Bofill, n.d.), which supports schools and other educational agents in developing synergies across learning spaces and times. Llopart et al. (2016) argue that political action is still needed in Catalonia to allow children's and youths' inclusive access to an expansive number of out-of-school learning resources, contexts and experiences and value the significant role of schools in contributing to making such inclusive opportunities available and meaningful. Carbonell (2015) argues that participation in nonformal education should be recommended for all students in Catalonia to support and enrich their school learning in ways that build bridges with mainstream schooling.

In their seminal reviews of international research on nonformal literacy programmes, Hull and Schultz (2001, 2002) conclude that: "There is much we can learn about successful pedagogies and curricula by foregrounding the relationship between formal education and ordinary life" (2002, p. 3). While recognising the descriptive usefulness of the in- and out-of-school bionomy, Hall and Schultz also argue for considering nonformal education as being non-oppositional to mainstream schooling, and for seeking opportunities to bridge learning times and spaces. In this regard, Subero et al. (2017) comment on a variety of projects internationally that have sought to incorporate students' funds of knowledge (Moll, et al., 1992), and what they describe as students' funds of identity, into educational practices which link up formal and nonformal educational spaces, as well as the informal learning that happens in families and communities. These include the aforementioned Fifth Dimension, La Clase Mágica and La Casa de Shere Rom projects (see Section 3).

Related research showing the educational value of students' funds of knowledge, in particular in regard to youth culture and nonstandard linguistic varieties, and about the need for youths' informal language knowledge to be included in formal education, are put forward by Aliagas et al. (2016), who research a project promoting Catalan teenagers' rapping in Catalan in a secondary school music classroom. Similar research linking teenagers' out-of-school language practices and their language learning at school was also at the core of the project 'Multilingual competences of secondary school students: continuities and discontinuities between educational and noneducational practices'. In this project, students became researchers of their own sociolinguistic surroundings and nonschool language practices, within the framework of a classroom

project developed collaboratively between high school teachers and university researchers (Masats & Unamuno, 2011; Unamuno & Patiño, 2017). A similar approach to bringing students' reflection on their everyday language practices into their school language classrooms was taken by Llompart-Esbert and Nussbaum (2020).

Finally, similar to the Fifth Dimension, La Clase Mágica and La Casa de Shere Rom projects (see Section 3), research by Moore and Vallejo (2018) and Vallejo (2020a), and by other authors such as Allor and McCathren (2004), shows how university students, and student teachers in particular, can also take on active roles in creating links between nonformal and formal education, through initiatives such as service-learning (Kinloch & Smagorinsky, 2014). These projects create mutual benefits and learning for all the actors involved and extend in-school and out-of-school learning communities to involve universities. For example, Vallejo and Moore's contributions describe a service-learning project that involved university students in the task of creating pedagogical materials for children in an after-school reading programme in Barcelona, which in turn emerged from the authors' volunteerism and ethnographic research within the out-of-school initiative.

## 6. Summing up

In this chapter we presented a review of the literature that informed our work within the IEP! project. We started by introducing an overview of research on out-of-school activities and educational inequalities, with a specific focus on Catalonia. The literature reviewed shows the influence of socioeconomic factors on the types of after-school activities that young people participate in, with less affluent children less likely to be involved in nonformal education. Influencing this tendency are the need to pay fees for extracurricular programmes and the extent to which parents are aware of the programmes on offer.

We then explored literature that considers the social and educational purposes of nonformal education and how it might support educational equity for young people who struggle academically or in terms of social skills, values, or attitudes. In this sense, extracurricular education has the potential to reduce social and educational inequalities, or to reproduce and even increase them when access is denied.

In the next section, we focused specifically on literature dealing with nonformal foreign language education that suggests that engaging with foreign languages outside of classrooms has a positive impact on learners' emerging language competencies. However, again, research findings show the impact of socioeconomic

status on different aspects of foreign language learning, highlighting that more affluent students are more motivated for nonformal language learning, which is at least partly linked to access to private education, extra instruction, and language learning materials. This has only been aggravated by recent financial and health crises.

We also examined research about children's and youths' informal foreign language learning. The literature shows that digitally-mediated time, including watching television and using computers, listening to songs, consuming YouTube videos, reading on the internet, writing on the internet, and watching subtitled movies in English, might have a positive effect on students' school performance.

The final section of the chapter discussed the implications of research on non-formal and informal language learning for educational action. We presented several initiatives that aim to promote not only equitable access to out-of-school learning opportunities, but also to establish meaningful connections between formal and nonformal education, including the 'Educació360: Educació a temps complet' (Education360: Full time education) initiative in Catalonia.

Also considered are other projects that seek to incorporate students' funds of knowledge and funds of identity, linking formal educational policy and actions with nonformal and informal learning. Literature exploring several initiatives in which students became researchers or took active roles in creating bridges between school and nonschool language and learning practices have also been described.

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Victor Corona / Claudia Vallejo / Emilee Moore / Jorge Solans

## **Is English important in your life? A collaborative experience in a secondary school**

**Abstract** In this chapter, we describe a collaborative action-research project involving an ethnographer, an English teacher and secondary school students in the production of videos about the role of English in the youths' lives. Building on the principles of language socialisation and imagined communities, the analysis of the videos produced by the students foregrounds the connections between their socialisation into English, their sense of present and future investment in English learning activities and their engagement with imagined communities of YouTubers and Instagrammers. Social media, digital platforms and private after-school language colleges emerge as central in young people's English language learning trajectories, alongside their formal education. We conclude that collaborative action-research initiatives might provide teachers, researchers and students with opportunities to connect youths' in- and out-of-school practices and engage them in more meaningful English learning experiences.

**Keywords:** language socialisation, imagined communities, digital platforms, ethnography, collaborative action-research, English learning.

### **1. Introduction**

As is introduced in the chapter by Moore (this volume), the municipality where IEP! took place was located in the industrial belt surrounding Barcelona. During the 1970s, it became the place of residence for large communities of migrant workers from other regions of Spain, as did many other towns and cities located near large urban centres in Catalonia. A short walk through the streets of the town leaves one with a first impression of its architectural characteristics: large apartment blocks without balconies, few green spaces and surrounding highways that act as borders. On this short walk, one also realises that the language most prevalent in the social life of the town is Spanish, while Catalan is less seen and heard. This is evident in the voices of merchants or in the large number of graffiti and tags in the public space that somehow vindicate the working-class spirit that impregnates the town.

Globalisation has changed the social and linguistic realities of cities on a global scale and the municipality at the focus of our research is no exception.

The languages that circulate in its streets are not only Catalan and Spanish; the linguistic repertoires of more recent transnational migrants coexist with historical forms of bilingualism, which have been reconfigured within an increasingly global and interconnected world. However, beyond languages as abstract entities, speakers symbolically and materially position themselves through the social value attributed to their linguistic repertoires (Pennycook, 2006). In this process of social and linguistic reconfiguration, the role of English is central. English is a language that is socially accepted as useful, politically neutral, and its learning is extensively perceived as somehow guaranteeing more successful schooling and future employment (Flors Mas, 2013; Garrido & Moore, 2016; Pérez-Milans & Patiño-Santos, 2014). English is also a compulsory school subject in Catalonia from the age of six.

## **2. The ethnographic project: English as an element of social differentiation**

The relationship between linguistic repertoires and social and educational success has always been close. Not only in Catalonia, but in any linguistic community, speaking or not speaking a language, or doing so in a particular way, carries embodied social meanings that are impossible to dissociate from linguistic practices and their agents (Corona & Block, 2020). In Catalonia, for example, a lack of proficiency in Catalan has important consequences for school results (Serra & Paladurias, 2010). Even in contexts such as the one where our research was conducted, where Catalan is rarely present outside of schools for some young people, its symbolic value is very important. While Spanish is commonly the socially shared language, Catalan is the language of institutional prestige (see Masats et al., 2017). In this negotiation of linguistic value, English occupies an increasingly important place (Patiño-Santos & Codó, 2021).

The ethnographic project that we have carried out as part of IEP! responded to a scenario described by Aitor, a 14-year-old boy who collaborated with the project. During one of the evening walks around the city with Víctor Corona, the first author of this chapter, following the Global StoryBridges activity he took part in (see chapters by Moore, this volume; Moore & Hawkins, this volume; Zhang & Llompart, this volume), Aitor commented: “Nadie aprende inglés en el instituto. Para aprender hay que ir a una academia privada” (“Nobody learns English in the high school. To learn it you must go to a private language college”). This statement is produced in a context where English is taught for at least three hours per week in secondary education. Keeping in mind that knowing English

is an element of social differentiation (see Moore, this volume; Patiño-Santos & Codó, 2021), it is not our intention in this chapter to avoid questioning this phenomenon. Rather, it is our hope that students' ethnographic work might help complexify these language dynamics.

In this chapter, we present an ethnographically-driven, collaborative action-research (Nussbaum, 2017) experience carried out jointly between a university-based researcher (Víctor Corona), a secondary school teacher (Jorge Solans) and secondary school students around using and learning English out of school. The chapter is organised as follows. In the next section (Section 3), we present a conceptual framework for understanding young people's language use and language learning. In Section 4, we present the methodological approach taken in collecting and analysing the data. In Section 5, we introduce the main characteristics of the collaborative action-research project, and the particular task proposed to the pupils studied in this chapter, that consisted in a video-production in which students reflected on the role that English played in their lives. Section 6.1 presents an overall description of the young people's resulting videos, which is developed in more detail in Section 6.2, where we analyse three of the videos produced by the students and their connections with the typical conventions of digital platforms and their communities of users and followers. Finally, in Section 7 we offer some final reflections on young people's perceptions, socialisation and investment in learning English, and on the challenges that these findings raise for researchers and teachers.

### **3. Theoretical framework**

Our theoretical framework articulates the principles of language socialisation (Garret & Baquedano-López, 2002; Ochs, 2000; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984, 2011; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986) with research on imagined communities (Anderson, 1991; Kanno & Norton, 2003; Norton, 2001). Language socialisation explores how language use and language learning relate to processes of becoming a competent and active member of specific communities (Ochs, 2000). Early approaches to language socialisation focused on the transmission of language and of specific social and cultural conventions from more expert community members to children and other novices. Current approaches, however, acknowledge that socialisation processes are not merely transmissive, but collaborative and multidirectional, and that they take place throughout our entire lifespan, across a range of social experiences and settings, and include multiple modalities along with language.

Most studies on language and cultural socialisation have focused on documenting practices of socialisation in tangible communities which can be directly observed, such as families, educational communities, neighbourhoods and work communities (for example, Vallejo, 2020). However, technological advances, transnational movements and digitally-mediated communications have expanded our sense of community beyond physical or territorially-bounded limits. In an increasingly global and interconnected world, the prevalence of digital spaces and digitally-mediated interactions in our daily lives has also had a significant impact on people's access to, connection with and sense of membership in non-tangible communities.

The concept of imagined communities, coined by Anderson (1991), refers to people's sense of affiliation with "groups of people, not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of the imagination" (Kanno & Norton, 2003, p. 241). These imagined communities include engagements with non-tangible social groups that extend beyond our direct local relationships. In his seminal work, Anderson proposes nations as examples of these imagined communities, in the sense that although we will never get to meet and interact with all of our fellow compatriots, the existence of a sense of community lives in the minds of each of us (Anderson, 1991). Imagined communities also include future relationships with transnational communities that for now exist only in our imagination. Indeed, as the internet and social media allow people to connect around the globe, the scope of what can be imagined and of possible selves and affiliations broadens significantly (Appadurai, 1996). These imagined communities, such as young people's membership or desire to become members of certain urban movements or professional collectives (e.g. YouTubers, Instagrammers, influencers), can have a strong impact on their identity building and actions, including their current investment in language learning and their learning trajectories. Therefore, exploring young people's current or future identification with imagined communities can elucidate issues relating to their identities and enhance our understanding of their language socialisation, language use and investment in language learning (Kanno & Norton, 2003).

Despite their non-tangible nature, imagined communities have defining regulations and requirements for participation, which determine what prospective members should accomplish to gain membership. In this sense, learning specific languages (e.g. English) and displaying particular forms of languaging and other embodied actions can be perceived as a means of preparation for and of gaining membership of specific communities.

In light of our data, the notion of imagined communities provides a theoretical framework for the exploration of youths' sources of language socialisation

and language learning in and beyond the school, as grounded in their current and future affiliations to transnational communities with specific codes and conventions, and of processes in which identity building, desires, play and creativity (see also Moore et al., this volume) have a central role in their engagement with English use and learning.

#### **4. Methodology**

As we have already mentioned, this chapter presents an ethnographically-driven, collaborative action-research (Nussbaum, 2017) study that took place in one of the secondary schools that participated in the IEP! project. From a methodological perspective, ethnography, one of the central tools in anthropology, is informed by both deep observation of specific contexts, and careful reflection on what is being observed. The observer is generally positioned as a participant of the community with a defined role, and subjectivity, far from being reduced, is conceptualised as a central resource for the production of knowledge. This chapter is the result of a collaborative experience that builds on observations gathered from the perspectives of a university-based ethnographer (Víctor Corona) and a secondary school English teacher (Jorge Solans), who worked together to implement a classroom project from an action-research approach. The other two authors (Claudia Vallejo and Emilee Moore) contributed to the interpretation of the data and subsequent theorisation. The collaborative work between researcher and teacher allowed these identities to be modifiable and exchangeable on many occasions, as the researcher took on the identity of teacher in the classroom activities studied, and the teacher approached the data gathered as expert analyst during discussions.

In this sense, ethnographic work is, above all, about establishing human relationships, as participant observation inevitably brings about long-term dialogue and co-existence. Following the French sociologist Jounin (2016), it is impossible to be gods or chameleons when doing observation, which means that we cannot see without being perceived, nor can we blend in like a chameleon. Our beliefs and ideologies play an important role in the relationships we establish with other people, and ethnographic research is no exception. In this project, researcher and teacher were fortunate to create a positive, collaborative relationship based on the shared belief that language learning must always be anchored in contextualised language use, and that research on language learning can be a tool for educational improvement.

In the study described in this chapter, ethnography was also employed to motivate students to notice, contemplate and investigate linguistic

phenomena that they take for granted. In this sense, ethnography was not only a basis for collaboration or a method of data collection, but also an epistemological stance, as one of the characteristics of our collaboration was that the students in Jorge's English class participated as researchers, actively producing the data that is analysed in this chapter. The aim was to establish connections between what they did within the school premises and the practices that they carried out in other spaces. This ethnographic work was intended as the first stage in a youth-led participatory action-research (YPAR) process (Ozer et al., 2010), in which students would explore their uses and learning of English, thinking strategically about how to build new and better opportunities for using and learning English in and beyond school, and then implement and evaluate these changes (Anyon, et al., 2018). This process had to be suspended due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the sudden switch to remote learning in March 2020, and thus remains a task pending for research following on from IEP! (see Moore, this volume; Moore & Morodo, this volume).

In the following section, we describe the collaborative process and the task set for students in more detail.

## **5. A project inside and outside of the classroom**

After four weeks of observation by Víctor in Jorge's secondary school English classroom, they met to discuss the design of a project in which students could reflect on the role that English played in their lives. The resulting task was for students to record very short videos in pairs or groups of three members, in which they answered various questions. To record the videos, it was decided to incorporate the use of students' mobile phones, which were already naturally present in the classroom. The intention was that the videos be as simple as possible, without much editing. To prepare the videos, students had to previously write scripts defining the place where they would record their videos, the communicative situation to be recreated (e.g. an interview), the proposed questions and the answers.

The activity motivated the students from the very beginning, and they even proposed digital applications with which they could edit their videos and began designing their settings early on (e.g. InShOt, VivaVideo). A particularity of action-research projects is that they are integrated into existing classroom dynamics (Nussbaum, 2017). Consequently, the project was designed in accordance with the regular English class schedule and usual flow. Indeed, as Jorge explained, recording videos was not an unusual task in his classes, as

this process allowed students to collaboratively create communicative products that prompted them to look for editing tools, be creative and mobilise various skills. Video-recordings were also material that could be used to assess students' pronunciation and oral fluency in the foreign language, features that can be extremely challenging to observe in class due to the number of students and the limited time available.

The intention when designing the activity was to create a clear and simple task, while not limiting students' options, allowing them ample freedom in terms of production and editing. What guided the making of the videos were the following four questions:

1. Has English affected your everyday life? Why (or why not)?
2. Where and when do you use English outside of the school?
3. What things have helped you to learn English?
4. How do you think English will affect your future life? (job, trips, etc.)

These questions respond to the objectives of the IEP! project (see Moore, this volume), but are also the result of prior ethnographic observations. These observations pointed to the need to carry out tasks in which students could put into practice their communicative skills in English, relating them to their interests and preferences. The intention was also that the students could interrogate and reflect on their own linguistic practices related to their context and daily uses. For Jorge, in addition, this proposal had affordances in terms of class motivation by offering students the possibility of recording the videos in spaces beyond the school.

Summing up, the purposes of this task were diverse. On the one hand, we wanted to create an audiovisual product in the English class that could be evaluated following curricular objectives, including the students' digital skills involved in the production and editing of videos. On the other hand, we wanted to understand, from the students' perspective, the value of learning languages – English in this case – in and outside of school. All in all, the aim was to open a space to listen to students' concerns and interests and to generate meaningful classroom learning. In the following section, we describe the outcomes of this task.

## **6. The young people's video productions**

This section of the chapter begins with a general description of all the videos produced by the young people. It follows with the in-depth analysis of three of the productions.

## 6.1. General description of the videos

Altogether, the class produced 19 videos. Given that the instructions for the activity were quite open and that the students were free to choose the setting, context and dialogue (the only condition was to address the four given questions, see Section 5), the resulting set of videos range from one-and-a-half minutes to five minutes in length and include some entertaining and ingenious productions. While allowing us to see to what extent English is important in the lives of these youth, this task also allows us to investigate how these videos constitute, in themselves, a material representation of the students' social context. A feature of particular interest was that, in order to give their videos certain 'realism', the young people addressed an 'imaginary' audience following the conventions of different out-of-school situations.

An element that emerges in virtually all the videos is that students consider English as a language that will play a key role in their future. English is often alluded to as "the international language", or as "a universal language". In their plans for the future, which according to the content of the videos range from working in a shop or in other services, to going to the university, English occupies a privileged place (see also Moore, this volume). Some students also mention, among their objectives, obtaining an official certificate in English, such as the Cambridge English First or Advanced certificates (see also Flors Mas, 2013).

While English is generally perceived as important for the young people's future, their answers diverge significantly when referring to its role in the present. The vast majority describe English as relevant as it allows them to watch videos or series in their original version with subtitles, or to interact with players from other parts of the world in online video games. Listening to music and reading comics or manga also emerge as activities in which the use of English has a significant role (see also Moore, Vallejo et al., this volume; Muñoz, 2020), as does communicating with students from Greece with whom the pupils had been engaged in a translocal project as part of their school English classes (see Pratinestós & Masats, this volume). While the vast majority say that English occupies a certain place in their everyday lives, there are also students who state that English is not at all significant in their daily comings and goings.

All the videos were made in English, although some of them include, more or less intentionally, shots in which jokes or instructions in Spanish can be heard. These shots mirror practices that can be observed within the students' English class at school, where Spanish or Catalan serve as languages of task management; that is, as languages that allow students to agree on the message they want to convey in English (Masats et al., 2007).

The emergence of these plurilingual practices is also evident in the use of approximate expressions in the target language (Bange, 1992). For example, a group argues that “English is the first idiom in the world”. Their laughter makes it evident that they know that something in the expression is not ‘correct’, but that it can be understood within the overall context. The videos also show that students do not have a homogeneous command of the target language. Some of them have lower fluency and need to read the scripts or use short, easy-to-memorise sentences to record their videos. Other students do not need to read and display more complex vocabulary and spontaneity in their speech.

This diversity of proficiency levels may have different explanations. However, allusions to “the academy” – that is, private after-school English colleges – frequently appear, and this is described as a key space where students speak and learn English. This is the case in all three of the videos analysed in Section 6.2. The students’ school English class also emerges in some of the videos, including in the three productions considered in Section 6.2, in which they mention school explicitly and/or refer to their exchanges with the students in Greece with whom they had connected thanks to their teacher. However, the importance given to after-school English colleges, a private resource, may be a way of understanding how inequalities are built in our schools in regard to the acquisition, or lack of acquisition, of socially relevant competences such as foreign language skills, an issue we return to in the concluding section of this chapter.

## **6.2. Followers: An imagined audience**

As previously explained, the task to be carried out by students was free enough that they could imagine or recreate the communicative situation that seemed most appropriate to them. Digital platforms including Instagram or YouTube seemed to provide students with the perfect imagined audience to produce their videos for – an audience that, while probably fictitious, provided them with the rationale for using English in a natural way. The audiovisual material usually produced within these platforms has certain rhetorical elements and a characteristic structure that the students seemed to know and manage comfortably.

A main feature of videos posted to YouTube or Instagram is that they are often addressed to a virtual imagined community known as ‘followers’ or ‘subscribers’. A follower or subscriber is someone who assiduously follows the content posted by a person on these digital platforms. Being a follower or subscriber means that one will receive a notification every time the person being followed uploads new content. The number of followers or subscribers someone has constitutes symbolic capital – capital sought by content creators. Having a significant number of

followers or subscribers does not only symbolise that the content that is created is interesting. Digital platforms often pay those content producers who manage to generate a large and loyal audience, since they also represent a captive audience for the advertising that both accompanies and is embedded in the audiovisual content. Consequently, the goal of the audiovisual productions posted to these platforms is often to obtain the highest possible number of viewings and the highest possible number of followers or subscribers. For doing so, content creators use a series of visual and linguistic conventions to attract viewers, conventions that also emerge in the videos produced by the students for their English class task.

We now analyse the structure and content of three of the 19 videos created by the students, beginning with Joan (JOA, pseudonym) and Leire (LEI, pseudonym), in Extract 1. The script and discourse of Leire and Joan's video follows the structure of a YouTube channel, and it begins with a screen showing the name of their invented production company. The video lasts for three minutes and 37 seconds.

### Extract 1

01 ((screen with the name of an invented production company,  
 02 coined from JOA's name, as music plays in the background; transition  
 to screen with LEI and JOA seated side by side, facing camera))  
 03 LEI ((arms wide open in salute/embrace, see Image 1)) hi: followers  
 04 welcome to a new video of our youtube channel.  
 05 JOA yeah. (.) today i am here with my friend leire (.) say  
 06 hello leire  
 07 LEI hello sweeties.  
 08 JOA for asking four questions that you always write us in  
 09 twitter. (.) there are-  
 10 LEI shut up joan i want to start right now.  
 11 JOA okey okey so: [((moving hands in circular motion,  
 12 fingers pointing, indicating transition to next  
 13 screen)) we star:t.  
 14 LEI [((moving hands in circular motion, fingers pointing,  
 15 indicating transition to next screen)) we star:t.  
 16 ((transition to screen with text 'FOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT  
 17 ENGLISH', followed by transition to screen with 'Has English  
 18 affected your everyday life? FIRST QUESTION', see Image 2))  
 19 LEI sincerely no. (.) the only thing that could affect  
 20 this language in my everyday life is my knowledge on  
 21 makeup cause i only watch videos of this in english.  
 22 (.) they are better that the spanish ones.  
 23 JOA in my case it's a bit different. (.) english has a big

24 presence in my everyday life. (.) as you know leire (.)  
 25 i go to an english academy twice a week and i watch a  
 26 lot of content in digital platforms like netflix or  
 27 instagram in this wonderful language.  
 28 ((transition to screen that reads 'Where and when do you use  
 29 English outside school? SECOND QUESTION'))  
 30 LEI the only place where i use english outside the school  
 31 is whe:n i make videos with joan for this wonderful  
 32 youtube channel.  
 33 JOA in my case it's again different as you know  
 34 leire (.) I have so friends english. (.) and the only  
 35 way to communicate with these friends is by english.  
 36 (.) talking in instagram chat yeah instagram chat.  
 37 ((transition to screen that reads 'What things have helped you  
 38 learn English? THIRD QUESTION'))  
 39 LEI besides watching makeup videos other things that have helped me  
 learning english is watching movies on netflix in this language.  
 40 JOA in my case ( ) thing that they have helped me in  
 41 this process of learning a lot of things in this  
 42 wonderful language that is english are different. (.)  
 43 going to an english academy twice a week. (.) and a  
 44 second thing talking with my friends- with my greek  
 45 friends on instagram.  
 46 ((transition to screen that reads 'How do you think English  
 47 will affect your future? FIRST QUESTION'))  
 48 LEI i think that english will be very important in my life  
 49 because i want to work as an airhostess a job where  
 50 english is essential.  
 51 JOA in my job english will be very important too because i  
 52 want to be a politician and english in this job it's a  
 53 tool that is completely necessary because talking in  
 54 english you can communicate you can work you can do  
 55 things with partners of other countries like for example  
 56 netherlands or france.  
 57 LEI and here ends our video.  
 58 JOA we hope that you liked it so:  
 59 LEI [((arms wide open in salute/embrace)) bye bye sweeties.  
 60 JOA [(bye bye sweeties.  
 61 ((transition to a screen with their school's logo, followed by  
 62 a screen with the logo and a slogan from the Catalan government  
 63 that reads '7,5 Milions de futurs', translated as '7.5 Million  
 64 futures'))



**Image 1.** Leire greets their imagined audience both verbally and with physical gestures (line 3)



**Image 2.** The first question appears on the screen (lines 17–18)

From the beginning, we see that Joan and Leire's video is aimed at a community Leire refers to as "followers" (line 3) – that is, an imagined community that frequently follows the content offered by them on their imagined YouTube channel. The genre of YouTube videos includes a section called 'intro', which corresponds to the moment when the theme and content of the video is presented for the audience in a brief and catchy way. In this case, with the visual support of transition screens (e.g. Image 2), Joan and Leire refer to the importance of English in their lives in response to the constant questions they supposedly receive on Twitter (lines 8–9), another digital platform, which implies that the YouTube content that they offer is framed within a pre-existing dialogue with these imagined followers. The close relationship that has been established with this imagined community of followers is also suggested by Leire's reference to them as "sweeties" (line 7) and her greeting them with open arms symbolising an embrace in line 3 (see Image 1), a feature that recurs in other students' productions (for example in Extract 2).

In order to be attractive, the content posted on digital platforms must be original and innovative. In line with these conventions, Joan and Leire try to impregnate their interactions with humour. In line 10, for example, Leire interrupts Joan with a "shut up" to take the floor and begin the presentation of the core content. Joan offers a reaction ("okay okay") to the interruption, after which he and Leire mark a transition verbally ("so we start", in overlap) and non-verbally, moving their hands in a circular motion with their fingers pointing towards the screen that is about to emerge (lines 11–15). After this, Joan and Leire respond to the questions from their followers which appear on written screen transitions, which make their responses more agile and the content more visual, also in line with the conventions of the genre.

The relevance of digital platforms such as YouTube, Instagram or Twitter emerges not only in terms of shaping the students' productions and creation of an imagined audience; in their responses, we can also observe that their learning of English in out-of-school contexts is closely related to these platforms. Both Leire and Joan claim that a main source of their socialisation in English is their participation in digital communities (YouTube and Instagram chat) that they use to communicate transnationally with friends – for example with the group of Greek students with whom they had connected through their school English class (see also Pratinestós & Masats, this volume), and from their consumption of digital audiovisual productions (on YouTube, Netflix and Instagram). Their use of an informal, vernacular English register also relates to the particular features and cultural conventions of the digital communities where they have been socialised.

Interestingly, what appears as relevant for these young people in their choice of digital content is not the fact of learning English, but the content that is available in this language. Leire explains that she follows makeup video channels in English not because they are in English, but because they are better than the ones in Spanish (lines 19 to 22).

Meanwhile, Joan claims to have a different relationship with English than Leire does, a phenomenon that was also observed throughout the ethnographic work in the students' English classroom. Joan is a very active student, not only on social media but also in his local community, within and beyond the school, where he participates in any initiative that he perceives as meaningful for his personal development. He frequently refers to his political interests, talks openly about his political inclinations and feels fully identified with the Catalan independence movement. As he explains in lines 51–56, his goal is to be a politician and he considers English as a key tool for his future political endeavours, foregrounding his ideological construction of the 'universal' value of English as a tool to communicate with colleagues from "other countries like for example Netherlands or France" (lines 55–56). Previously, in lines 48–50, Leire had also expressed the importance of English for her future life as an airhostess.

Thus, both Leire and Joan's investment in English learning and use can be better understood in light of the imagined communities they place themselves within, both in the present, as imagined YouTubers and overall users and consumers of social media, and in the future, as part of professional collectives that, they assume, need English to communicate and work.

The second video analysed was produced by Alaitz (ALA, pseudonym) and Amaia (AMA, pseudonym) (Extract 2). Alaitz and Amaia also use the format of a digital platform, in this case Instagram, to create an imagined audience that asks them questions about the role of English in their lives. The video lasts for one minute and 43 seconds.

## Extract 2

01 ((opening scene with ALA and AMA seated side by side, ALA does 'duck  
 02 face', See Image 3))  
 03 ALA [((arms wide open in salute/embrace))  
 04 hi: guys.  
 05 AMA [((arms wide open in salute/embrace)) hi: guys.  
 06 ((music can be heard and different Instagram style images of the two girls  
 07 flash on the screen))  
 08 ALA today we prepared a video for you how english affects in our

09 lives eh: because you request a lot in the comments.  
10 AMA we speak english in the school in the academy that we go two  
11 days for week.  
12 ((video cut, new frame))  
13 AMA these are the questions that you put in our instastories that we  
14 are going to answer today.  
15 ((video cut, new frame, then a written question - "what would you like to  
16 do in the future" - appears in the upper left corner of the screen, with a  
17 space below with the word 'reply', chat style; ALA reads from mobile  
18 phone; see Image 4))  
19 ALA james charles asked what will you like to do in the future.  
20 ((a new question appears on the screen - "where you learn english?"; ALA  
21 continues to read from mobile phone))  
22 ALA elise asks where you learn English.  
23 ((a new question appears on the screen - "why do you speak English very  
24 good?"; ALA continues to read from mobile phone))  
25 ALA and carolina asks why do you speak english very good.  
26 ((video cut, new frame))  
27 ALA also we speak with people of °( )° [((laughs))  
28 AMA [((laughs))  
29 ((video cut, new frame))  
30 ALA also we speak with people of greece that we met on exchange.  
31 AMA oh yes i want to come back.  
32 ((video cut, new frame))  
33 ALA but amaiia we don't learn english only in the school or academy  
34 (.) we also watch videos of makeup in english.  
35 AMA yes we got a lot of videos of this because the uk people explain  
36 better than the spanish.  
37 ALA in spanish. [((laughs))  
38 AMA [((laughs))  
39 ((video cut, new frame))  
40 AMA and wait we watch videos we also watch a tv series netflix  
41 ALA oh yes i really forgot we start watching you a famous serie in  
42 uk and now in spain because is translated to spanish.  
43 AMA we recommend this series a lot to the people that like drama and  
44 ( )  
45 ((video cut, new frame))  
46 ALA talking about the future eh: we will do the first certificate  
47 and the advanced.  
48 AMA because we need these titles to work and do the degree that we  
49 want.  
50 AMA [((arms wide open in salute/embrace)) bye see you in the next.  
51 ALA [((arms wide open in salute/embrace)) bye see you in the next.



**Image 3.** Opening scene with Alaitz doing duck face (lines 1–2).



**Image 4.** Amaia reads a question on her phone, as it appears on the upper left-hand corner of the screen (line 19).

Alaitz and Amaia ensemble a myriad of multimodal elements within their audiovisual performance (pop music, still images, text on the screen, mobile phones, face and body gestures), to create an overall product that complies with the characteristics of YouTube videos. The embodied resources that the girls display, such as their salute with wide-open arms, which resembles the one used by Leire in Extract 1 (see Image 1) or the so-called 'duck face' (see Image 3), function as visual cues to situate the audience of the video within the community of consumers of this type of content. Through these embodied cues, and similar to Leire and Joan in Extract 1, Alaitz and Amaia perform as a couple of celebrities who are producing this video in response to their followers' insistence (lines 8–9).

The protagonists read the questions supposedly sent by their followers from their mobile phone, but these also appear written on the upper part of the screen (Image 4). As this celebrity-style performance continues, it incorporates new questions from imagined followers who ask Alaitz and Amaia why they speak English so well. In their responses, the girls make reference to their school and to attending an after-school English college twice a week (lines 10–11). Similar to Leire and Joan, in lines 30–31 they also make reference to speaking with the Greek students they connected with and visited as part of a project in their English class (see Pratginestós & Masats, this volume). Finally, they refer to watching videos about makeup as important factors for learning English (lines 33–36), similar to what Leire and Joan expressed in the Extract 1.

Using digital platforms like Instagram ('Instastories', line 13) and watching series on Netflix (line 40) also emerge as central elements in the development of Alaitz' and Amaia's English language skills. Furthermore, in line with their imagined status as influencers, and in compliance with the dialogic nature of their video, Alaitz and Amaia include a recommendation of a Netflix series for their followers in their video (lines 41–44).

Finally, the girls also frame their learning of English as an investment in their future studies and jobs, stating that they will sit for the Cambridge English First and Advanced certificates (lines 46–49).

This video is considerably shorter than the one by Leire and Joan in Extract 1, but the two productions share similar features in terms of style and content, including, for example, the use of text to present the questions and the gesture – opening arms fully in a sort of embrace – with which they open and close the interviews. In the images (screenshots) that we have included, it can be observed how the youth skilfully include these and other multimodal features and conventions of the digital communities in which they have been socialised and within which they position themselves.

Finally, we analyse a video produced by Alicia (ALI, pseudonym), Hayat (HAY, pseudonym) and Dunia (DUN, pseudonym) (Extract 3). Alicia, Hayat and Dunia also build their video based on the rhetorical conventions of Instagram or YouTube, with the particularity of presenting a challenge for their imagined followers. The video lasts for two minutes and 49 seconds.

### Extract 3

- 01 ((opening scene with three girls standing together, see Image 5))  
 02 DUN hi gu:ys we are alicia hayat and me dunia and today we are going  
 03 to do a draw collaborating with the cambridge english academy.  
 04 (.) we are going to do a challenge that consists in eh: explain  
 05 our experience with the english and how we use it in our day  
 06 ah:m in the time that we have to: go up with electric stairs.  
 07 (.) eh if someone of us can eh: say all the things during the  
 08 time that she's in the stairs she win. (.) eh: someone of you  
 09 can ehm came to the trip with us eh: for this you only have to:  
 10 follow us in instagram and here in youtube.  
 11 ((video cut, change of scene in which HAY and ALI are going up the  
 12 escalator, HAY reads questions from her mobile phone))  
 13 HAY alicia has english affected your everyday life?  
 14 ALI eh it doesn't affect me much because i: i speak spanish everyday.  
 15 (.)  
 16 HAY eh: where and when do you use it.  
 17 ALI quick quick ((laughs)) when? (.) in the academy (.) in the  
 18 english classroom.  
 19 (.)  
 20 HAY okey. (.) what things has helped you to learn english.  
 21 ALI eh: eh in the academy. ((laughs)) o sea the academy. (.) english.  
 eh: eh in the academy. ((laughs)) i mean the academy. (.)  
 english.  
 22 HAY how do you think english will affected you in the future.  
 23 ((HAY and ALI are almost at the top of the escalator))  
 24 ALI eh eh eh happy ((laughs)) o sea no ((laughs))  
 eh eh eh happy ((laughs)) i mean no ((laughs))  
 25 ((HAY and ALI reach the top of the escalator and get off))  
 26 ((video cut, new scene with ALI and HAY getting ready to go up the

27 escalator, ALI reads questions from her mobile phone))

28 DUN tres hala.  
*three come on.*

29 ALI has english affected your everyday life?

30 HAY no because i don't need it?

31 ALI where and when do you use english outside of school?

32 HAY in the english academy?

33 ALI what things have helped you to learn english?

34 HAY e:h taught in the english academy and english class.

35 ALI how do you think english will affect your future?

36 HAY ye:s to work and do other things and travel.

37 ((HAY and ALI reach the top of the escalator and get off))

38 ALI una dos y tres. (.) dunia.  
*one two and three. (.) dunia.*

39 HAY dunia has english affected your everyday life?

40 DUN yes because sometimes i speak with my greek friends and i use  
 41 it.

42 HAY where and when do you use english [outside school?

43 DUN [ehm: i use it speaking with my friends and some films and series  
 44 that i saw.

45 HAY what things have helped you english- [learn english.

46 DUN [eh: my english academy and the series.

47 HAY how do you think english will affected you in the future.

48 DUN very important for my work and my future.

49 ((DUN and HAY reach the top of the escalator and get off; change of frame  
 50 to close-up of all three))

51 DUN hi guys we expect that you like a lot our video (.) we think is  
 52 a very original video a:nd very funny too we expect that you  
 53 have a great time seeing us (.) a:hm please sub- ah: for  
 54 participate in the draw you have only to be followers in our  
 55 instagram (.) and nothing more.

56 ALI please subscribe in our youtube channel.

57 HAY we will say the winner of the draw in the- in our instagram  
 58 account.

59 DUN bye bye

60 ((they all blow a kiss))



**Image 5.** The girls introduce the challenge of their video (line 1)

By way of introduction, Dunia presents the workings of the challenge in lines 2–10. Basically, each of the girls has to answer as many questions as they can about the importance of English in their lives while going up a moving escalator. The challenge consists in answering all the questions before reaching the top. Their imagined community of viewers is able to participate in a draw to go on a trip with the girls (line 9) by subscribing to the girls' YouTube channel or becoming followers on Instagram (lines 10 and 53–55).

The girls' answers are very much in line with what their peers had explained in other videos, placing private after-school language colleges and their school as key spaces for English learning and use (lines 17–18, 21, 32 and 46).



**Image 6.** Dunia answers the questions while going up the escalator, constantly arranging her hair (lines 38–48)

To a lesser extent, their social activities, including speaking with their Greek peers (see Pratinestós & Masats, this volume) and audiovisual consumption through digital platforms, also play a role in their development of English skills, namely in Dunia's case (lines 40–41, 43–44 and 46), as do their imagined futures, in which English is perceived by Hayat and Dunia as important for both traveling and work (lines 36 and 48), while for Alicia it is not so (line 24).

An original element, in comparison to previous fragments, has to do with their perception that English has no current impact on their lives, as they claim not to use it (Alicia, in line 14) or need it (Hayat, in line 30) beyond the academic sphere. In this sense, their current investment in learning English in and out of school seems to relate more to their imagined futures than to their current daily actions.

One final observation has to do with the girls' embodied actions. They straighten their hair (Image 6), send smiles and blow kisses to their followers (line 60). These embodied actions are quite common in the videos produced

by the students – not only in the three that we have analysed here – and are significantly more frequent in the productions by girls than in those by boys. This might suggest that the conventions of digital platforms and the challenge to attract more followers are linked to displays of explicit sexuality. While this issue is not developed in this chapter, it certainly requires more in-depth attention.

## 7. Conclusions

All in all, we consider that the project was meaningful for all the participants involved, both in terms of the results – that is, the production of the videos – and the process through which they were achieved. Ethnographic observations by researcher and teacher have allowed us to document how the task actively engaged the youth. The creation of the scripts produced intense discussions regarding the importance of English, but also of other languages. These discussions were carried out, for the most part, in Spanish, but some groups also ventured into speaking in English while working on the task and engaging in these reflections. Classroom projects like the one we have presented here seem conducive to the incorporation and development of digital skills and digital literacies which permeate students' daily lives and interactions.

The analysis of the three extracts suggests that, to a large extent, these students have been socialised into English through their engagement with imagined communities of YouTubers, Instagrammers, and users of other digital platforms. Despite their non-tangible nature, these imagined communities are very much at the heart of the English practices and conventions that these youth skilfully display in their videos. Furthermore, the perceived relevance or usefulness of English for the students, and their investment in the learning of the language in and especially out of school, are illuminated by tracing the young people's present and future affiliations to imagined communities. These are possibly more significant to their learning of English than their face-to-face practices and interactions.

Students' affiliations to imagined communities where English is perceived as playing a key role emerge in many forms: in the transnational, digitally mediated relationships they establish with other youth across the globe (in this case, with the Greek students with whom they have carried out a project and an exchange as part of their English class, see Pratinestós & Masats, this volume); in their consumption and production of audiovisual products using a myriad of digital platforms; and in their imagined professional lives and desires for future mobility. As these imagined communities give students a sense of direction and

influence their current language learning trajectories, researchers and teachers might do well in better acknowledging students' out-of-school engagements and practices of language socialisation, and building bridges across school and everyday English uses.

In this sense, the experience of creating and implementing this English classroom project has proved to us that languages are important to young people; not only English, but the whole plurilingual repertoire with which they live and consume digital media, among other uses. The message we extract from this experience is that while English is important for students' lives, schools need to provide them with renewed motivation and learning challenges. Public schools should react to the finding that private language colleges are considered by young people to be a key space to learn English 'for real'. To accept this would be to accept the perpetuity of educational inequalities and the commodification of English as cultural capital limited to those who can afford private after-school instruction. Tackling and reversing this situation is a major enduring challenge facing researchers and teachers.

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Cèlia Pratginestós / Dolors Masats

## Learning English in translocal exchanges in Instagram chat

**Abstract** This chapter analyses how social media – Instagram chats – is employed by a group of youth in Catalonia and in Greece for communicating in English as a lingua franca, as an extension of a translocal project initiated in their schools. We set out from the premise that learners’ participation and willingness to use the language to communicate in this context can be attributed to a genuine, agentive interest in learning English, even though learning English is neither the immediate nor the main goal of the youths’ communicative exchanges. Our study focuses on the plurilingual and multimodal procedures participants employ to organise participation, construct meaning and build relational bonds. Our results suggest that learners’ communication in the lingua franca is scaffolded by a channel they are well acquainted with – Instagram – and a shared code including emoji and multimodal resources. Additionally, we discuss the methodological and ethical challenges teachers and researchers face when supporting out-of-school digital spaces for learning and conducting research.

**Keywords:** learner agency, participation, turn-construction units (TCU), plurilingual and multimodal communication, Instagram chat, informal language learning

### 1. Introduction

The reasons adolescents might have for interacting through social media in their everyday lives are countless, but most of the time, they are arguably not primarily related to language learning. However, using a foreign language in digital channels can become an unexpected language learning experience for teenage language learners. The notions of ‘online informal learning’ (Sockett, 2014; Toffoli & Perrot, 2017), or ‘CALL in the digital wilds’ (Sauro & Zourou, 2019) – the latter based on the notion of ‘learning in the wild’ (Clark & Lindemalm, 2011; Clark et al., 2011; Firth & Wagner, 2007; Moore, 2015) – encapsulate the idea of informal language learning in digital spaces, communities, and networks that are independent of formal instructional contexts, less controllable or organised than a classroom (Sauro & Zourou, 2019), “but which present interesting, and perhaps even compelling, opportunities for intercultural exchange, agentive action, and meaning making” (Thorne, 2010, p. 144). In this chapter we focus on peer

interactions in Instagram chats, as an extension of a translocal project initiated in their school.

Our study seeks to comprehend how a group of Catalan and Greek adolescents organise their participation and create social bonds in this digital space. In particular, we analyse how they structure their turns and orient to the other participants to convey and construct meaning in English as a lingua franca. In Section 2 of the chapter, we discuss the notion of learner agency and the nature of communication through social media. In Section 3, we present our corpus and justify our decision to employ the theoretical and methodological toolkit of conversation analysis (CA) in our study. We also argue for the need to expand the understanding of turn construction units (TCUs) proposed by Sacks et al. (1974) to account for the nature of multimodal communication in social media. In Section 4, we use our proposed model for analysing participation and learner agency in Instagram chats in interpreting our data. To conclude, we reflect upon the implications of our study for the teaching and learning of foreign languages.

## **2. Learner agency and participation in peer interaction through social media**

Agency has been described as a “temporally embedded process of social engagement” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 963) and as a socioculturally mediated process related to people’s will to act (Gao, 2010). According to Mercer (2012), it “concerns how agentic an individual feels both generally and in respect to particular contexts [...] [and how that] individual chooses to exercise their agency through participation and action, or indeed through deliberate non-participation or non-action” (p. 42). Learner agency has captured the attention of language education researchers as one of the keys to success in learning (McLoughlin, 2016), especially because it is linked to processes of self-regulation and has an impact on learners’ self-efficacy, identity, motivation, and meta-cognition (Xiao, 2014). As Larsen-Freeman (2019) claims, “although second language development is rightly seen to be embedded in a larger sociohistorical ecological system, languaging is still performed by an agentic learner in particular in a specific place [...] for particular reasons with particular others” (p. 63). Larsen-Freeman (2019) defines learner agency as being emergent, spatially and temporarily situated, achieved, relational, changeable through iteration and co-adaptation, heterarchical and multidimensional.

Agency is emergent because it is situated in a particular time and space, while also being shaped by past, present and future experiences (Larsen-Freeman,

2019); it is the “capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 963). Agency should “be conceived as something that is achieved, rather than possessed, through the active engagement of individuals with aspects of their contexts-for-action” (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 134). It further depends on “the availability of economic, cultural and social resources within a particular ecology” (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 137). Additionally, it is relational because it does not depend on one individual (Gallagher, 2017), but develops “in relationship with others and with the world” (Miller, 2014, p. 142) and it changes because learners iteratively co-adapt to one another time and again. Change – co-adaptation through an iteration process – depends on several of the previously mentioned traits; thus agency is heterarchical because those traits are interlinked. Finally, agency is multidimensional and contingent upon intrapersonal factors (emotions, beliefs, personality, etc.), occurs simultaneously on the three levels of learners’ engagement (behavioural, cognitive and emotional), and is observable in learners’ discursive actions. The behavioural dimension of learners’ agency relates to participation and interaction patterns and to turn allocation and turn selection processes. The cognitive dimension refers to how interactants understand and convey meaning. The emotional dimension – which we will refer to as relational so as to distinguish this type of engagement from emotions as interpersonal factors – concerns the employment of affective, cohesive, and interactive indicators of social presence. For example, the use of humour, emoji or self-disclosure texts denotes affection; the use of vocatives or inclusive pronouns are a few of the procedures learners employ to maintain group cohesion; and referring to others’ messages or asking questions contributes to the social construction of discourse.

Participation is reflected through the actions all interactants perform during the development of a particular communicative event (Goodwin & Goodwin, 2004). Text-based, mobile-mediated chats like Instagram feature the use of abbreviations, interjections, and a range of audiovisual resources that shape the way in which utterances are produced and received. Consequently, meaning is mediated by photographs, gifs, short videos, audio messages, emoji, etc., which may remain in the chat or disappear after being viewed once, according to the parameters set by the sender. These features influence turn-taking and the construction of the next turn; they “might posit word-like properties and show grammatical patterns and orders, similar to words” (Stamatov, 2017, p. 2). Furthermore, these multimodal resources may often convey meanings that are more complex than the simple observation of what they represent, because their interpretation relies on the ability to make constantly evolving and varying

intertextual connections that can be highly ephemeral as they are often linked to trends or events that are only meaningful and relevant for a certain time. This constant adaption and evolution can be linked to the idea put forward by Blommaert and Rampton (2011) that:

contexts in which people communicate are partly local and emergent, continuously readjusted to the contingencies of action unfolding from one moment to the next, but they are also infused with information, resources, expectations and experiences that originate in, circulate through, and/or are destined for networks and processes that can be very different in their reach and duration (as well as in their capacity to bestow privilege, power or stigma). (p.14)

Therefore, when approaching technology-mediated interaction through a social media app, conducting a “multimodal analysis is an inevitable empirical adjustment to contemporary conditions, and we are compelled to move from ‘language’ in the strict sense towards semiosis as our focus of inquiry” (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011, p. 28).

In the Instagram chats studied in this chapter, participants are more focused on the progressivity (Heritage, 2007) of the interaction than on language problems, and they orient to different discursive activities to accomplish and co-construct understanding (Gonzalez-Lloret, 2011; Mori 2004; Wong, 2005). Different languages are frequently put into play to help communication progress and meaning is co-constructed and mediated through translation and peer-scaffolding. The mobilisation of plurilingual resources (Llompert et al., 2020) in the interactions studied in this chapter is closely related to the use of multimodal elements. The visual resources deployed pertain to a medium which young participants are not only familiar with, but expert users of. Even those young people who are not confident in English as the lingua franca still interact more or less successfully thanks to their mobilisation of multimodal resources, together with plurilingual ones. The young people switch from one code to another (Auer, 1999), including different languages and modalities; for example, to emphasise an idea, participants may convey the same message subsequently in different languages or in different modes (text, image, audio, etc.). Our research thus supports the claim that plurilingualism must be regarded as being embedded within multimodality (Masats & Nussbaum, 2021).

### 3. Methodology

In this section of the chapter, we present the theoretical and methodological toolkit employed, our research objectives and the corpus studied.

### 3.1. CA for the study of Instagram chats

Conversation analysis (CA) offers the theoretical and methodological apparatus used in this study to investigate authentic, situated interaction, focusing on how participants orient to, understand and construct each other's actions (Sacks et al., 1974). CA enables researchers to determine how speakers demonstrate they understand each other in the context-shaped and context-renewing character of interaction (Heritage, 1984). When the interaction analysed is not oral but written and technology-mediated, adopting CA involves taking into account that sequence organisation in technology- or mobile-mediated communication might seem "chaotic, highly disrupted, without any adjacency [...], mainly due to the fact that the exact timing of message placement cannot be controlled by the interactants" (González-Lloret, 2011, p. 310). However, previous research has shown that participants' turns tend to orient clearly to specific previous turns within the same conversation, which has been referred to as 'virtual adjacency' (Schönfeldt & Golato, 2003), including when participants are language learners (González-Lloret, 2007, 2008). It must be noted, however, that in Instagram chats, unlike other text-based chats (i.e. WhatsApp), participants cannot select a previous message to signal they are posting a response to that message, which makes it more complex to reconstruct adjacency pairs. In this vein, as González-Lloret (2011) points out, the turn-taking system in technology- or mobile-mediated text-based communication differs from face-to-face interaction and is highly constrained by the medium (see also Beisswenger, 2008; Garcia & Jacobs, 1999; Herring, 1999; Murray, 1989; Negretti, 1999; Schönfeldt & Golato, 2003; Thorne, 2000), which poses challenges for both participants and CA analysts.

Difficulties arise when determining what constitutes a turn. To describe the organisation of turns, we have coined the term 'message unit'. Message units are created when participants press enter to post their contributions. Participants may opt to post a contribution as a single message unit or divide it into smaller units. In the first case, turn message units are compact (we call them 'compact message units'); no other participant takes the floor while the message is being produced and delivered. In the second case, the message is split into what we call 'split message units' and other participants may either decide to wait to receive what they interpret as the complete contribution, or participate while one (or more) different units are still being constructed. In this latter case, we interpret that a new turn has been opened by means of an overlap. Other types of overlap are difficult to interpret as such because in Instagram chat turns do not physically overlap; that is, two participants may be producing their messages at the same time, but their posts will be published one after the other. The exact time

when a message is posted is not recorded either, therefore overlaps cannot be measured and pauses cannot be inferred. If messages are not read synchronically, it is impossible to determine whether two messages were posted at the same time or after a pause. Similarly, a string of turns repeating the same word(s) within the same exchange cannot simply be analysed as choral responses; it may be the case that all participants had simultaneously opted to take the floor following a self-selection procedure, but some participants may also opt to respond after seeing other participants doing so. Furthermore, our description of the composition of turns is not only constituted by lexical (words), phrasal (phrases), clausal (clauses) and sentential (sentences) units, but also by visual (pictures, gifs, giphys and emoji), audial (instant recorded oral messages), audiovisual (videos) and hypertextual (links to other – multimodal – texts) units.

To demonstrate our approach, in Image 1 we observe two turns; one produced by speaker C1 and the other produced by speaker G1. Speaker C1's turn is composed of a compact message unit which consists of a sentential and a visual unit (line 10). As a response, G1 produces a turn composed of a message unit split into two smaller units: a visual unit (line 11) and a lexical unit, which is repeated twice (line 12).



**Image 1.** Screenshot of message units.

### 3.2. Research objectives

This chapter studies learners' spontaneous use of social media (i.e. Instagram chat), triggered by their participation in a translocal classroom project. Particularly, we aim to investigate how the learners' interaction in social media prompts their agentive use of English. We will identify the three dimensions

(behavioural, cognitive and relational) that constitute this multimodal agency by observing the discursive actions learners adopt to interact and co-construct meaning. Thus,

- to identify the behavioural dimension of learners' agency, we analyse participation and turn allocation and turn selection processes;
- to explore the cognitive dimension, we study how interactants construct their turns, and
- to examine the relational dimension, we focus on their employment of affective, cohesive, and interactive indicators that denote affection or social presence.

### 3.3. Corpus

The study presented in this chapter is an extension of a collaborative research project aimed at empowering teachers to transform teaching practices in the English classroom ('Teachers as agents of transformation through their engagement in cross disciplinary innovative projects in the English classrooms [DATE]', led by Dolors Masats<sup>1</sup>). Within this initiative, teachers were encouraged and enabled to implement meaningful and innovative teaching, creating opportunities for authentic communication in English (Dooly & Sadler, 2019). The design, implementation and assessment of these proposals was done through a form of collaborative action-research (Nussbaum, 2017; Masats et al., in press), in which teachers and researchers work in collaboration from symmetrical positions to design, implement, assess and disseminate classroom proposals. This type of research is also referred to with the Spanish term *colabor* (Leyva & Speed, 2008; Ballena et al., 2020). In this collaborative spirit, the actual teaching proposal that frames the data analysed here was designed by the authors of this chapter and an English teacher (Jorge Solans) participating in the study. It aimed at offering a group of Catalan adolescents from a public high school in the metropolitan area surrounding Barcelona opportunities to use and interact in English. This collaborative proposal engaged two groups of students, in Catalonia and in Greece, in a classroom project to get to know each other's culture and lifestyle. The two groups were connected through different virtual exchanges organised and mediated by their teachers so that they could share information on various topics related to their traditions and daily life. By the end of the project, the classes planned a face-to-face meeting in Greece, which triggered the interest of participants to

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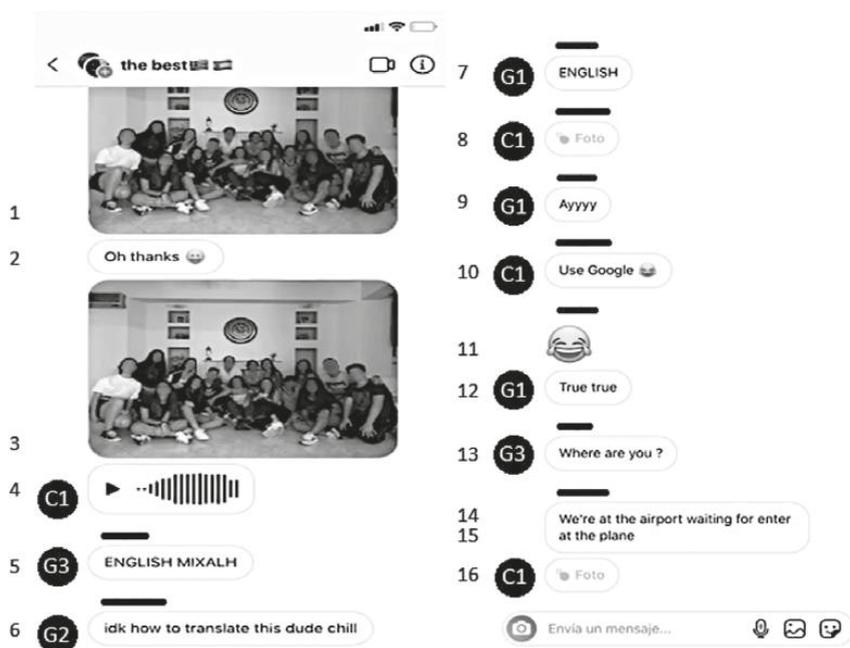
get to know their peers better. As a consequence, during the videoconferences carried out in their classrooms, they found an excuse to exchange their personal Instagram accounts to socialise. The translocal project, therefore, succeeded in offering the students an authentic context in which to use the target language in and outside the classroom. At that point, teachers requested access to their Instagram chat conversations and students accepted to send them screenshots on the understanding that these data would be used for research purposes; in this case as part of the IEP! project, which focused on out-of-school use and learning of English.

### **3.4. Data treatment and ethical issues**

The data studied in this chapter are screenshots of Instagram chat conversations that Catalan students voluntarily shared with researchers, before and after meeting face-to-face with their Greek counterparts. Ethically, our data collection practice has pros and cons. The translocal project offered students an authentic context in which to use the target language. This was particularly important in the school in Catalonia which was located in an underprivileged milieu and whose students had rarely experienced a real need to learn English. The use of social media in a language other than the one used in their homes also reinforced the value of learning foreign languages. Teachers/researchers had parental permission for legitimising communication outside the classroom through social media and also permission from all participants to have access to the screenshots for research purposes, which have been anonymised. Yet, as the bonds between students grew more solid, especially after the two groups had met personally in Greece, having to send their teachers screenshots of their chats was seen as an intrusion into their private lives. At this point the data collection ceased.

The excerpts we examine in this chapter serve as examples of interactions not mediated by the teacher, where learners use language in a natural, authentic manner, without any supervision. Methodologically, the data is interesting because it gives access to natural talk-in-interaction occurring outside classroom walls. However, it poses two major problems. In Section 3.1, we already problematised the notion of TCU to account for the multimodality of discourse in social media. A second problem relates to the features of the chat itself and to the fact that the exchanges may not always be complete when data is shared with the researcher, either because the students only select fragments of their Instagram chats or because the screenshots acknowledge the presence of audio and visual elements which are not disclosed to the teachers/researchers, or no longer available. Here we present an example of the type of data being

analysed to illustrate the characteristics of our corpus. As we see in Image 2, the screenshots of Instagram chats reveal that our participants deploy different types of multimodal resources to interact, as discussed in Section 2 of the chapter (e.g. abbreviations, audio clips, emoji or photos). As for the photos, it is to be noted that there are two types according to their display time; some stay in the chat and some others become unavailable once they have been seen once. The user of the app decides on either option before sending the photo to the chat. The same applies to audio messages.



**Image 2.** Screenshot of group chat at the end of the trip to Greece.

Image 2 also illustrates the way data was treated before the analysis. To guarantee anonymity, students' faces in the pictures were blurred by the researchers. Similarly, the names of the participants were crossed out and their profile pictures replaced by a code composed of a letter (G for Greek students or C for Catalan ones) and a number identifying the order of first appearance of the participants in the chat, which is maintained throughout the different excerpts (so G1, for

example, is the same student in all the data). This code is also employed to substitute students' names when they are mentioned in the text messages (see Image 3 in the next section).

Screenshots are shown as they were received by the teachers/researchers, which means the photos are shown if they were visible in screenshots learners shared. Multimodal data such as photos and audio clips are considered as information present in turns. The content of the deleted photos or the audio clips that are not available to researchers are counted as elements that constitute a turn because they were available to the participants. Additionally, we added line numbers. Turns can be simple and correspond to one line, as we can see in lines 3 (picture), 4 (audio) and 5 (text) of Image 2, or longer and correspond to several lines. In Instagram chats, participants' names appear at the beginning of their turns. In our data, turns start in the lines with no participant code and end in the lines that contains the participants' code. Thus, lines 14–16 of Image 2 correspond to one turn produced by a Catalan student (C1). That turn is composed of text (lines 14 and 15) and a photo (line 16). Finally, it is important to mention that any non-standard language use or spelling in the excerpts was produced as such by the participants. Translations from Greek to English have been added, when necessary, after text lines (see Image 3 in the next section).

## **4. Understanding Instagram chat and language learning**

The objective of the analysis is two-fold. First, we examine two excerpts of one-to-one Instagram chats as examples of how learner agency is triggered by the classroom telecollaboration proposal and the mobility programme that derived from it. Second, we will focus on how a group of Catalan students participate in those chats, and especially how they construct and convey meaning. Our analysis sheds light on learning in the digital wild and on how interaction unfolds in Instagram chats.

### **4.1. One-to-one Instagram chat**

The first excerpt (Image 3) we analyse corresponds to a private chat with two participants in which a Catalan female student (C2) and a Greek male student (G12) are sharing information about each other after one of the teacher-mediated virtual encounters, during which participants spontaneously and agentively decided to share their Instagram accounts by holding up pieces of paper with their usernames.



**Image 3.** One-to-one chat occurring after one of the teacher-mediated virtual encounters.

First, we see that participation is quite balanced among the two participants: G12 produces four turns with a total density of 52 words/emoji, whereas C2 produces a total of three turns and 49 words. Yet, although G12 enacts an agentive behavioural action and takes the initiative of starting the conversation (line 1), C2 immediately self-assigns the role of allocating turns and proposes the topics that will unfold in the conversation, by making an explicit request (“tell me something about your life”, lines 3 and 4) or by prompting a response through a question tag (“no?”, line 16) based on a comment previously made by G12 (that he had played basketball for four years). So, in this excerpt we can interpret agency as a process of co-adaptation to the circumstances in which the interaction unfolds and which is

observable in the procedures of turn and topic selection and acceptance. Second, if we focus on the traces that participants' cognitive actions leave on this chat, we can observe that the composition of the turns each participant constructs differs slightly. By asking G12 to introduce himself (lines 3 and 4) and commenting on what he says (lines 13–16; 18–20), C2 actively participates in the communicative event through the production of turns which take the form of split message units that only contain short sentences. Yet, her action triggers the production of a compact message unit by G12, which is composed of both text and visual units. With regards to how the message is conveyed, we might argue that the Greek student seems to use a rehearsed discourse when introducing himself, with the utterance being similar to one that could be produced during a classroom activity. On the contrary, the Catalan student's turns resemble more spontaneous dialogue and she enacts listenership by showing attention to and commenting on the information G12 provides (lines 13 and 14) and constructing her messages based on that information (lines 15–16; 18–19). Third, the relational dimension of the learners' agency can be observed by analysing social presence in the content of the turns. Affective indicators of social presence in this excerpt take the form of visual (emoji) and lexical units (interjections) to represent laughter. Both participants resort to laughter to show affiliation with each other and to create a sense of 'community'. Laughter is used by C2 to justify her request to G12 to disclose his life (line 4) and by G12 to signal his acceptance (line 5), reinforced by the use of the lexical unit 'okeyy' (his lengthening of the "y" reinforces the acceptance), before actually taking the action of introducing himself. When G12 completes his disclosure of personal information (lines 11 and 12), he does so with laughter represented by an emoji, preceded by an iteration of the sentence unit C2 had produced to request that information from him (line 3). Referring to another's message is an interactive indicator of social presence. C2's response to the last part of G12's message also starts with a lexical unit to represent laughter, followed by a sentence unit that embraces G12 in her state of being bored. The use of inclusive pronouns ("we", in this case, line 13) is a cohesive indicator of social presence. Finally, laughter in line 17 is used by G12 to indicate that he liked C2's appraisal of his basketball skills and in line 20 it is used by C2 to signal that she made an impressive revelation – that she has been doing judo for 10 years and is thus also good at it – which is interpreted as such by G12 when he produces an interjection to show admiration ("Wowww", line 21). Social presence is also traced through other interactive indicators, such as asking questions (as C2 does in line 16) or referring to others' messages (as G12 does in lines 11 and 12; or C2 does in lines 15 and 16). Additionally, C2's split message unit in lines 18 and 19 is

constructed by relating to one of the topics (interest in sports) G12 had brought up, which is a cohesive indicator of social presence.

As this excerpt is an example of peer interaction on Instagram chat, it is not surprising that participants deploy so many indicators of social presence. The opposite would be strange. Yet, we also claim this is a learning space. In this regard, we can observe that both participants take risks when participating. G12 misspells two words (“cuncil”, line 7; “wtcing”, line 9), which seems to indicate he struggles with them. We do not consider the spelling errors to be the typical abbreviations people use when texting because G12 does not employ this procedure in any other message he sends. C2 seems to take even more risks; she expresses herself more naturally in the sense that she does not produce classroom-like messages as G12 does, and she relies on plurilingual procedures to overcome language troubles and participate in the conversation in English. For example, in lines 13–14 she relies on code-mixing procedures and constructs a sentence unit (“we are already two who got very bored”) that is a word-for-word translation of a typical Catalan expression (“ja som dos els que ens avorrim”). Similarly, in line 16, she closes her sentence unit with a “no?”, which corresponds to the standard confirmation tag that it is used in Catalan and Spanish. At the end of this excerpt, we can also observe an instance of self-repair; when C2 first made use of the interjection for laughter, she used the Spanish spelling (line 4), which was followed by G12 using the same interjection spelt in English (line 5). As his split message unit was immediately followed by quite a long compact message unit (lines 6–12), G12’s move was not interpreted by C2 as a hetero-repair, which explains why she uses the Spanish spelling again in line 13, when she takes the floor. Yet, it is interesting to note that after the Greek student uses again the interjection “Haha” with English spelling in line 17, the Catalan student incorporates the corrected spelling into her next turn (line 20). We cannot confirm whether she does so as self-repair or to imitate G12, but we do consider this uptake to offer learning potential. This focus-on-form episode can only be understood in the emergent, spatially and temporarily situated context in which learners’ agency has been achieved, and which leads participants to put into play their interactional competence in English as a lingua franca.

#### 4.2. Instagram group chats

In this section we analyse an episode that takes place on an Instagram group chat when the Catalan students were at the airport about to board their plane back home after their stay in Greece. The conversation is very lively as students are recalling all the enjoyable moments they have shared together and are expressing

how they will miss each other. There are several group members in this chat, but only one Catalan student (the one who provided us with the screenshots) and 11 Greek students participate in the conversation by producing at least one post. The episode has been divided into two parts to facilitate the analysis. In the first part (see Image 4), C1 takes the initiative and addresses the Greek students. This excerpt ends when he posts his last farewell message. The second part of this episode (see Image 5) contains the response of the Greek students to C1's last message, which serves as a conclusion.

The communicative episode starts with a photo that is not available on the screenshot (see line 1 in Image 4), as it is the kind of photo that can only be viewed once according to the app parameters set by the sender, as detailed in the Section 3.4. That unavailability of the totality of the content from when the actual conversation took place poses a challenge for researchers; not having access to the entirety of participants' turns makes it impossible to interpret how the topic was selected in turns 1 and 2 in Image 4 from an emic perspective. However, the episode presented in Images 4 and 5 does not contain any other non-disclosed image, therefore, we can trace how the conversation unfolds.

Image 4 has two main participants: the Greek student G1 and the Catalan student C1. C1 produces eight turns with a density of 46 words/emoji and G1 produces nine turns with a density of 32 words/emoji. The other participants – Greek students G2, G3 and G4 – base their participation on G1's and C1's turns; G2 produces four turns and a total of 15 words/emojis, G3 produces three turns and a total of six words and G4 produces one turn and a total of four words. Other Greek students are also attentive as we will see through their participation in Image 5. From Image 4 (line 25), we can also see that at least one Catalan student – C3 – is also a silent participant (the photograph depicts students C1 and C3). We will now proceed to analyse participation and the construction and allocation of turns and topics.



**Image 4.** Instagram group chat with Greek and Catalan students occurring just before the group of Catalan students board their plane back to Catalonia.

Image 4 provides an example of agency, understood as a process of co-adaptation, that is observable through the actions taken by participants when selecting and accepting turns and topics. Participants' behaviour in this chat differs from that of the students in Image 3 in the sense that the sequences that make up this episode do not unfold one after the other, instead most are embedded in another. The fact that this is a group chat and that different participants may be writing a post at the same time offers an explanation of why this is so. Although Instagram does not allow for participants to refer to the exact turn they are responding to, 10 different sequences can easily be traced. C1 is the participant who took the agentive action of initiating the episode, the one that participates most and who initiates most of the sequences (five out of 10) by proposing new topics. G1 is the student who produces most turns and words/emoji, but only initiates a side-sequence to take on the role of interlinguistic mediator (see Zhang & Llompart, this volume). G2 only produces four turns (two sentence units in Greek, one in English and one visual unit) but initiates three sequences. Additionally, we can see that most sequences are made up of either two- or three-turn units. Occasionally, the same turn is responded to sequentially by several participants. For example, in lines 14 to 16, G2 had suggested that G1 go to the airport through a split message composed of a textual and a visual unit (two emoji laughing with tears of joy). G1 responded with the same emoji (line 17). The sequence could have ended with this adjacency pair (proposal/reaction), but G4 (line 18) and C1 (line 19) also react. It is interesting to note that C1's turn in line 19 serves to close a sequence (lines 14–19) but also triggers a new adjacency pair (request/refusal, in lines 19–21) in which G1 provides a reason for not going to the airport. Thus, we can conclude that agency in this medium and at the time in which the episode occurred is achieved through students' behaviour (turn initiation and topic selection) but does not correlate with the density of participants' discourse.

The cognitive actions students undertake to construct their messages are varied. C1 seems to have preference for producing messages composed of sentence units in English (lines 2–3, 6–7, 19, 30, 34 and 36) and G1 for constructing messages composed of sentences (lines 4, 21, 23, 27–29 and 32–33) and lexical units (lines 5, 11, 12, 38 and 39). Occasionally they both resort to the use of emoji as indicators of social presence in response to what other participants have said. As Dooly and Czura (2021) note, emoji are combined with verbal communication and are understood as an alternate code or language variety. Thus, emoji:

may have more communicative purposes than simply conveying emotions or pictorially representing facial expressions or gestures [...] [and] may be deployed to orchestrate the interaction (e.g. mitigation through humour) or to elicit a next-turn interaction from other participants (e.g. orientation of an expected response). (Dooly & Czura, 2021, p. 223–224)

In our data, emoji produced in multimodal turns (used in combination with lexical units) are used by interactants to provide connotative meaning relating to the degree of commitment to the truth of the propositions they utter. For example, when C1 in line 19 requests G1 to go to the airport, he knows it is not feasible. Therefore, his verbal request is followed by an emoji laughing with tears of joy. However, when turns are only composed of visual units or two split message units (one of which is visual), emoji express a reaction to a previous turn. For example, C1's reaction to the turn produced in Greek (line 8) is delivered through a visual unit in the form of an emoji with crossed eyes, often meaning dead or astonished (line 10). In either case, emoji are code-switching procedures with communicative intent.

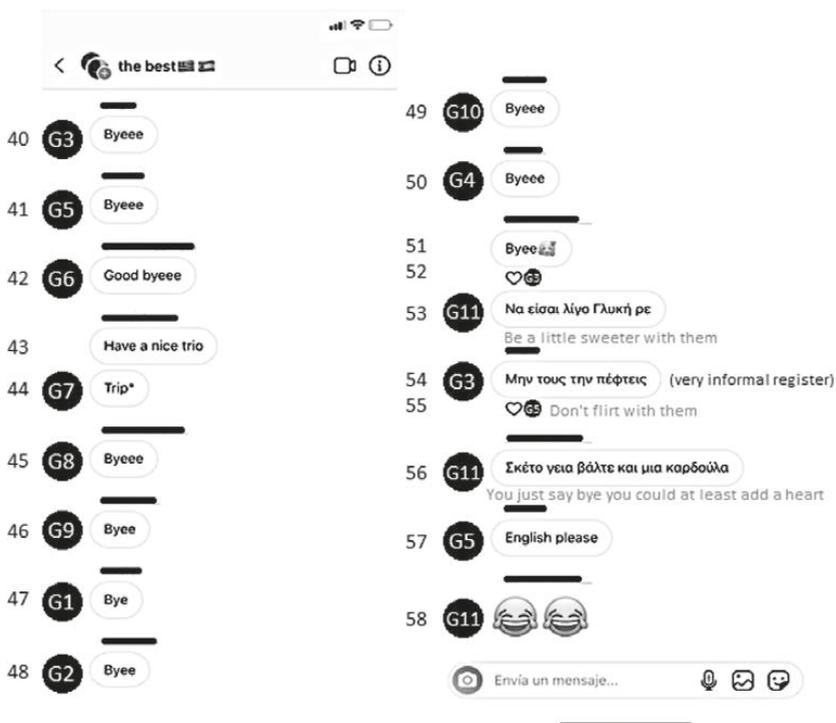
That is, in line 10, C1 shows astonishment about G2's turn by switching from one code (verbal) to the other (visual). Similarly, G1 responds multimodally with laughter to G2's proposal both with a lexical unit (the slang interjection "Lo!" in line 12) and with a visual unit (tears of joy emoji, in line 17). G2's four turns are produced in Greek and in English and are also composed of sentence units (lines 8, 14–15 and 22) complemented with emoji (line 16). G2's code-switching, unlike C1's actions, is used to signal a change of addressee (G1 and not the whole group), which, on one of the occasions (line 8) is also reinforced by the fact that a vocative (the addressee's name) is used. So, by switching to Greek, G2 is not only addressing a Greek participant but also excluding (purposely or not) the Catalan participants that do not speak Greek. The participant-related switch (Auer, 1999) in line 8 triggers G3's turns in lines 9 and 13 in which she asks her peer to switch back to English. Thus, G3 takes the agentive action of regulating code use without actually translating G2's turn. This is done by G2 himself, who in lines 14–15 accepts G3's request and translates the utterance he had previously produced in Greek into English.

As we discussed earlier, C1's acceptance of G2's proposal (line 19) through a message composed of a sentence unit and a visual unit (an emoji laughing with tears of joy, possibly showing that his proposal is a joke) serves to open a new topic (a request/invitation to G1 to visit them at the airport). G1's message to declare he cannot travel to the airport and justify why (lines 21 and 23) is split into two posts. G2's second switch into Greek (line 22) is again participant-related, as it is addressed to G1 only and embedded within his split message. G1 responds with

an emoji in line 24. As his message is produced after his response to C1's invitation, G1 adds G2's name in his turn. G2's message in line 22 is delivered in a quite informal register with the inclusion of an abbreviated swear/slang word. His use of the first-person plural pronoun signals he embraces G1's idea when he claims "we (Greek students) don't have anything else better to do" – presumably, apart from going to the airport to see the Catalan group off. G3 participates with an interjection in Greek representing laughter and written in capital letters ("XAXA", line 26), suggesting a louder utterance in digital text-based communication. In her turn in line 26, G3 seems to be responding exclusively to G2's previous turn in Greek. This leads G1 to take on the role of interlinguistic mediator and to entirely reformulate G2's message (he changes "we" in Greek to "he" in English, uses a more formal register and "We don't have anything better to do" is replaced by "He said that he wants to come to the airport But he cant", lines 27–29). The translation of G2's turn does not include G1 as one of the people who have nothing to do, and it comes after G1's disclosure of the reasons why he cannot get to the airport ("+ I have a German lesson", line 23). This prompts C1 to ignore G1's translation of G2's comment and to ask for more information regarding G1's German lesson (line 30), just before G2 formulates a turn with a visual unit (the thumb-up emoji) to signal his acceptance of G1's adapted translation of his own words (line 31). G1 responds with a sentence unit explaining that he has a German class imminently, preceded by a vocative to indicate C1 as the person he is addressing (lines 32–33). C1 completes this sequence with a comment preceded by the interjection "Wow" to indicate amazement (line 34), to which G1 responds with an emoji (line 35). The turn produced by G1 here also triggers the initiation of a new sequence, in this case, an adjacency pair as a farewell. The fact that C1 starts this last exchange with the adverb "so" (line 36) indicates the connection between the two turns (lines 32–33 and 36). The use of G1's name also corroborates this and signals that C1's farewell is addressed to him only.

The fact that the sequences are interwoven does not seem to be a barrier for participants to convey or interpret messages. This is so, in part, because participants take multiple agentive relational actions to guarantee the cohesion of the co-constructed message. For example, G1's sentence unit in line 23 is preceded by a "+" symbol to indicate that this turn is part of a split message unit he was elaborating before G2's turn. The use of vocatives by G1 and G2 also serve to guarantee discourse cohesion and, like code-switching procedures, are also indicators of social presence as they signal who is included or excluded from each sequence. Group cohesion is achieved through interactional procedures including asking questions on a previous topic (as in line 30) or responding to other's messages (as in lines 17, 18 or 19, to cite a few). The employment of

affective indicators such as humour (as in lines 14–16 or 19), self-disclosure (as in line 23) and especially the use of emoji, reveal social presence; that is, participants' ability to project themselves socially and affectively. The whole conversation is scattered with emoji, representing different reactions and emotions as a response to an immediate or distant previous turn. Code alternation from textual to visual message units is done naturally and emoji are integrated into the different sequences. Emoji are also employed to qualify messages. For example, in line 37, C1 produces a turn by simply clicking “like” on his previous sentence unit message to reinforce the idea that he really hopes to see G1 again. Thus G1's next turn is a split message to respond both to this wish (line 38) and to the farewell (line 39). In Image 5, which is the continuation of this conversation, we observe how two other interactants also participate by clicking “like” on a message produced by a peer (lines 52 and 55).



**Image 5.** Continuation of the Instagram group chat with Greek and Catalan students occurring just before the group of Catalan students board their plane back to Catalonia.

Image 5 is also interesting because although up to that point only four Greek students had displayed the agentive action of taking the floor, there were, at least, seven other Greek students engaged in the communicative episode we are examining. We are unsure whether the Catalan students did not respond to this choral farewell because they were no longer available – they may have been boarding the plane – or due to other reasons. We need to bear in mind that time is not recorded in Instagram chats, so this string of messages could have been produced within a few seconds or over a longer time span. Additionally, turns do not overlap, which poses a challenge for researchers when recreating how the discourse evolved. In Image 5 we can observe 19 turns and three sequences. The first sequence is a farewell exchange that started in the last two turns of Image 4, when C1 says goodbye to G1 (line 36) and the latter responds (line 39). This farewell exchange has three moves. The first one is the farewell between C1 and G1 (lines 36 and 39, Image 4); the second one (lines 40–51, Image 5) is a string of farewell utterances whose target addressee changes as the discourse unfolds; and the third one (line 52, Image 5) is an assessment move (a “like”) performed by G3 on G11’s turn. If we take a closer look at the second move from the first sequence, we can see that Image 5 starts with a post by G3, one of the students who had already taken part in this episode (see Image 4). In her turn, she is unlikely farewelling C1 as C1 had not explicitly addressed his farewell to her; instead, she seems to address the whole silent Catalan student audience. This is confirmed when the string of farewell utterances is over; the use of a plural vocative ‘them’ in the sequence produced in Greek by G11 and G3 (lines 53 and 54) indexes that the Greek students perceive the group of Catalan students as ratified participants (Goffman, 1981) in the event, and were addressing their farewell to them all, and not just to C1. Similarly, the fact that G1 offers his farewell again (line 47) also indicates that he is no longer addressing C1, as he had done in the previous excerpt (line 39, Image 4), but the whole Catalan audience. This change of target audience is not signalled but is implicitly assumed by the Greek participants and is possibly what triggered them to explicitly participate by posting.

In Image 5 we can also observe that the string of messages is not produced simply as iterations of G3’s first turn. So, out of the 11 turns that make up the second move of this first sequence, eight are composed of the same single lexical unit (versions of “bye” in lines 40, 41, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49 and 50), one is produced with this lexical unit followed by a visual unit (line 51), and one is made up of two lexical units (line 42). In all cases, “bye” is produced with a variety of spellings, with various extensions of the vowel “e” at the end of the word. In Instagram, like in other text-based social media chats (e.g. WhatsApp, Messenger or Facebook), the more letters that are used to extend the last vowel

sound, the longer the sound being represented, which could be an indicator of interactants' genuine interest in participating in this last communicative episode. Finally, only G7 takes the agentive action of expressing farewell by employing a different conversational formula ("Have a nice trio", line 43), which semantically connects with the actual reason why they are saying goodbye to their friends. It is also worth mentioning that G7's clause unit contains a spelling mistake that is marked with the "x" symbol, as is convention in this medium, and self-repaired in the following line ("trip").

The second sequence in this excerpt takes place in Greek and involves two Greek students: G11 (in lines 53 and 56) and G3 (in line 54). G11 is the last participant to post a farewell message and the only one that complements the lexical unit with a visual unit: a smiling face with three hearts emoji (line 51). This action is followed by a comment on how other Greeks should farewell their Catalan friends (line 53, translated as "Be a little sweeter with them"). His participant-related switch into Greek indicates he is addressing his Greek counterpart only. G3 (the same student who had asked G2 to use English in Image 4) responds (we can't tell in which order) by liking the message that contains the emoji (line 52) and by producing another sentence unit in Greek (line 54, translated as "Don't flirt with them"), which is marked with a "like" by student G5 (line 55). In reply, G11 produces another sentence unit in Greek (line 56, translated as "You just say bye you could at least add a heart") to justify himself.

A final consideration about Image 5 relates to the third sequence. In it, G5 participates again by producing a clause unit (line 57) that paraphrases G3's turns 9 and 23 from Image 4. G11 responds to this with a visual unit, a face with tears of joy emoji (line 58). These last two turns reveal that although G5 and G11 had not posted earlier, they were attentive to how the interaction unfolded.

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

In this chapter we have examined how two groups of English learners use Instagram chats to communicate and socialise translocally. Their interest in consolidating their bonds was genuine and was rooted in their participation in a collaborative classroom project that involved several online exchanges and a trip by the students from Catalonia to visit their counterparts in Greece. The initiative of establishing contact in a non-teacher-led environment offered to them by social media was an agentive action students took in class and that teachers/researchers, after obtaining parental permission, encouraged. The results of our analysis on learners' participation in two communicative episodes occurring in two of those Instagram chats – one between two learners and the other between

the two groups – have implications for both teachers and researchers, which we will discuss after summarising our findings.

We have seen that both posting and not posting constitute behavioural agency actions participants undertake. Being silent does not indicate absence or disengagement, as we saw in Image 5 when two Greek students, G5 and G11, made reference to a previous joke to which they had not previously responded. Similarly, the Greek students in Image 5 address their farewell to all the Catalan students, when only one of them, C1, had been posting, while another was only made visible in a photograph C1 had posted of the two of them. Our analysis also reveals that the density of participants' messages, calculated in terms of number of turns and of lexical and non-lexical elements in their contributions, does not relate to the agency actions of selecting and attributing turns or topics. Thus, in Image 3, participation is quite balanced if we observe the behaviour of the two students in the chat, yet the student who initiates the episode and produces most turns and denser contributions is not the one who allocates the turns and selects the topics. The same occurs in the group chat, in which G1 is the participant with most turns and the second in terms of the density of his contributions, but he only selects one of the 10 topics during the conversation. On the contrary, G2 intervenes half as much as G1, with less dense contributions – two of his turns are in Greek, one is in English (the translation of one of the turns he produced in Greek) and one is constructed with a single visual unit (an emoji) – but he initiates the topic of three of the sequences.

With regards to indicators of participants' cognitive agency, that is, the actions interactants adopt to produce their messages, we can see that communication through English, a language both groups are learning, is scaffolded by the use of a channel they are familiar with (Instagram) and the legitimate shared code (including emoji and other multimodal resources) that accompanies it. Posting emoji (or "likes" to own and other's messages) entails enacting listenership, understood as "the act of giving feedback on prior messages" (Choe, 2018, p. 703), but emoji are also used to add meaning to the message being conveyed. For example, in Image 4 an emoji is used by G2 (line 16) to indicate that he knew his proposal (lines 14–15) could not be accomplished. Similarly, laughter – expressed through textual units in the form of interjections or acronyms – is used to modulate a demand so that it could be interpreted as a mild request, as in Image 3. Additionally, different symbols are employed for purposes that are recognisable to technology-mediated text writers (e.g. the "+" symbol is employed to indicate that a message is incomplete or the "\*" symbol is used to introduce a correction). Participants' communication, apart from being supported by the agency action of employing multimodal resources (participants shift from

text-based messages to visual messages in Images 4 and 5), is also scaffolded by the languages in the participants' repertoires, as observed when interactants rely on mechanisms such as code-switching (they produce messages in Greek in Image 4) or code-mixing (they make a word-per-word translation of a Catalan idiomatic expression in Image 3).

Cognitive agency is also achieved when interactants take decisions regarding the density of their contributions. In Image 3 we observed how one of the participants opted for creating compact message units which contained several smaller units (in the form of sentence units or image units) and a variety of topical elements. On the contrary, in Images 4 and 5, participants opted to construct their turns based on what we called split message units, that is, by developing a topic though more than one brief post. These agency actions have implications for how the conversation unfolds and are partially dependant on the space in which it takes place; in Instagram chats turns never overlap, previous messages cannot be selected to mark they are being addressed, unlike, for example, in WhatsApp. Consequently, while in Image 3 topics develop sequentially, in Images 4 and 5 all sequences contain other embedded sequences. Yet, the conversation develops fluently and with no misinterpretations, which indicates that all participants know well how to participate.

The mediation actions of translating the sequences produced in Greek into English could be regarded as a means of achieving relational agency in the sense that while the original language choice excluded part of the interactants from the conversation, interlinguistic mediation moves acknowledged them as ratified speakers. Other relational actions in our data include the use of emoji, humour, and self-disclosure (affective indicators), the employment of vocative and inclusive pronouns (cohesive indicators) and the actions of asking questions or referring to other messages (interactive indicators). Again, students seem to rely on these procedures rather spontaneously, which leads us to argue for the need to bring technology into the classroom to establish connections between classroom practices and social practices. As we mentioned, the introduction provided by G12 in Image 3 in the form of a compact message unit resembles the type of texts students produce in the classroom when asked to introduce themselves, but the way interaction unfolds in excerpts Images 4 and 5 differs a lot. Hence, if the role of formal language instruction is to trigger an authentic need for learners to use the target language to accomplish real communicative goals, classroom practices cannot ignore the type of communicative practices learners engage in in informal environments. That is, language teachers should allow for classroom communication and learning to generate the kind of learning opportunities that informal communication offers. This study sheds light on the nature

of participation in out-of-class peer interaction and may serve as inspiration for those teachers willing to promote learners' abilities to participate in real social encounters mediated through technology.

Our chapter also seeks to contribute to the study of peer interaction and learning in the digital wild. Since learning is a socially situated action, participation in Instagram chats in English as a lingua franca is to be regarded as a potential language learning experience in itself, although concrete evidence of language learning can also be traced in the data (see for example C2's self-repair in Image 3), even though that is not learners' immediate goal. The study of language learning through social media needs a robust theoretical and methodological apparatus. We have argued that CA, and especially the notion of TCU proposed by Sacks et al. (1974) to study participation, is valid if it is updated to capture the essence of multimodal communication such as that developed in social media. In this regard, we suggest that the types of units that make up a turn should be expanded to include non-textual units such as audio/video files, photographs and all sort of visual elements (gifs, emoji, likes, etc.) or the prototypical symbols in technology text-based communication (\*, +, etc.). In our data, non-textual units, apart from contributing to the co-construction of meaning, also constitute the preferred mode of participation of some of the interactants. Symbols, on the other hand, are used by interactants as cohesive devices to link together the split message units that constitute their turns, as we see in Image 4.

A second challenge researchers of authentic, informal, peer communication face relates to the ethical implications of using personal data disclosed by learners. The Greek and Catalan students in our study gave us permission to read their personal communication and they were the ones who selected what we could and could not see. We also had consent from their families. Nevertheless, 'spying' on how young people build up their relational bonds raises ethical issues as we described in Section 3.4. Therefore, it is necessary to create conditions under which social media can be used in classrooms in a genuine manner and investigate the types of discourse it generates and how it contributes to learning. Proposals in which formal teaching and learning is developed through social media are still scarce but gaining prominence in the formal language classroom. An example of one of these emerging initiatives in secondary classrooms in Catalonia can be found in the work of Olivé (2020a, 2020b), who engages language and literature students in the process of understanding literary work by setting them, for example, the task of impersonating in Instagram a character from the novel they are reading.

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Emilee Moore / Margaret R. Hawkins

# The affordances of an arts-based approach for building opportunities for young people's learning

**Abstract** This chapter sets out from the empirical basis of data collected in a digital storytelling activity implemented as part of the IEP! project, in which different creative practices and methods come into play. Considering the complex codependence of elements – mediational tools and artefacts, roles and identities, language/s, histories, space, time, activities, etc. – that converge in and around a handicraft activity carried out in one session, we draw on the notion of ecology to consider the opportunities for young people's (language) learning that emerge therein. The analysis focuses on how: 1) life histories create a panoramic space for learning; 2) the youth develop self-knowledge in the ways they manage their activity and their relationships; and 3) the youth harness the affordances of the context for managing their engagement and alignment in the activity and with others.

**Keywords:** youth, ecology, arts-based approach, critical cosmopolitanism, digital storytelling

## 1. Introduction

One of the after-school opportunities implemented under the auspices of the IEP! project was a digital storytelling activity, part of the Global StoryBridges<sup>1</sup> initiative, in which a group of local youth produced and shared videos of their lives and communities with young people at other global sites (see Moore, this volume). This chapter sets out from the empirical basis of data collected during one session of this after-school activity. Creative practices, while being at the core of the production of the digital stories, were also used in local activity sessions to promote group cohesion, the youths' participation and their (language) learning.

Informing this chapter, on the one hand, is the increasing interest in creativity and the arts – in a broad sense – in language education (see the AILA ReN on Creative Inquiry in Applied Linguistics formed in 2018). While the affordances of the arts for understanding or promoting different types of

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1 See <http://www.globalstorybridges.com/>

learning is often an implicit focus of this emergent strand of research, the intersection between language, learning and the arts has so far been understudied and undertheorised (Bradley & Harvey, 2019). This chapter asks how the young people's involvement in a particular handicraft activity helped shape the interactional dynamics that emerged in the session and afforded potential for their learning.

On the other hand, the notion of ecology (e.g. Hawkins, 2004; Van Lier, 2004a, 2004b, 2008; see Section 2) is drawn on to consider the emerging educational affordances of the handicraft activity in more depth. The learning setting we study is oftentimes a challenging one, with complicated relationships, irregular attendance, floundering interest and heterogenous competences in English among the youth – English being the lingua franca of the digital stories made for their global peers and the language used by the activity facilitators. An ecological approach allows us to consider what is impacting the environment, interactions and relationships – young people's histories, their use of and proficiencies in different languages, embodied modes beyond spoken language (with a focus on gaze, facial expression, posture and gesture), artefacts (specifically, a mobile phone that is brought into the interaction), literacies, participants' roles, and so on.

The chapter is structured as follows. In Section 2, the ecology framework as a theory of learning is introduced. Our focus is on the potential for learning afforded by the ecology from a sociocultural perspective (Hawkins, 2004), rather than on cognitive development (Van Lier, 2004a, 2004b, 2008). The ethnographic and arts-based research methodology followed is then presented, before offering the analysis of a single sequence of interaction. The chapter concludes with a synthesis of the specific empirical findings and of the more general implications of this research.

## **2. An ecological perspective on emerging opportunities for learning**

The protagonists of this research are a group of young participants in the after-school activity and the adult facilitators of the session, who are also university-based researchers. In the data studied in this chapter, the youth and adult participants are seated around a table crafting Christmas cards. The young people had suggested this activity as part of a process in which they would create cards and then hand them out to residents of their town. They would also film the making and delivery stages of the process in order to later edit and share a digital story representing how they celebrated Christmas as a group with members

of Global StoryBridges at other sites. The analysis in Section 4 focuses only on the card-making stage of the process. As participants make the cards – cutting, pasting and drawing – they ask and answer questions, manage roles and relationships, move between different languages, and so on. Throughout the talk, the participation of the young people varies as they choose to take part actively or not in the conversation – by looking up or down from their card-making, by speaking or by remaining silent. Somehow, in this often-challenging educational space, the activity seems to work. Learning, including learning of English, seems to be possible.

Considering the complex codependence of activities, mediational tools and artefacts, roles and identities, languages, histories, and so forth that converge in and around the interaction studied, the notion of ecology is drawn on, as it has been developed in sociocultural language education research, as an analytical frame for considering the affordances for young people's learning emerging in the data. From a sociocultural perspective, Hawkins (2004) describes learning spaces, including but not limited to classrooms, as:

complex ecosystems, where all of the participants, the practices, the beliefs, the forms of language, the forms of literacies, the social, historical and institutional context(s), the identity and positioning work, the politics and power relations, the mediational tools and resources, the activity and task designs, and the influences of the multiple local and global communities within which they are situated come together in fluid, dynamic, and ever-changing constellations of interactions, each one impacting the other. This is not a static process, but one that shifts with each new move/interaction, and as new organisms enter the environment, as ecological systems do. It is a fragile balance, and in order for it to “work” – to have the inhabitant life forms survive and prosper – we need to understand not only the individual components, but also the ways in which the patterns and the ebb and flow of contacts and engagements result from and contribute to the whole. (p. 21)

In her presentation of an ecological approach, Hawkins (2004) builds on multiple notions, including communities of practice, identities, power and multiple literacies. Her focus is primarily on ecosystems – their flows and effects, and the potential for learning afforded by the ecology – rather than on cognitive development.

From a sociocognitivist perspective, van Lier (2004a, 2004b) explains that an ecological approach is not a particular theory or model of teaching, learning or researching, but rather a ‘world view’ that aims to give coherence to different ideas about language in education, and language education in particular. According to him, main theoretical concerns include perception as multimodal and multisensory; action and activity; self and identity in relation to the world;

and learning as adapting to one's environment in ways that are increasingly effective and successful. All of these concerns are interrelated and relevant for interpreting the data studied in this chapter. However, coherent with our understanding of cognition and learning "as a public, social process embedded within an historically shaped material world" (Goodwin, 2000, p. 1491), they need nuancing as phenomena that are necessarily social; thus, we take them into account only insofar as they are manifested in the situated interaction analysed.

As for the first two concerns – perception and action – drawing on Gibson (1979), van Lier (2008) discusses different ways of seeing: snapshot (immobile perception), ambient (looking around) and ambulatory or panoramic (moving around). Developing Forman's (2005) work, van Lier (2008) links ambulatory/panoramic perception to pedagogical approaches in which learners are more active; in which they physically move around and engage in joint action (for example in project-based learning), or in which language use itself constructs movement and panoramic spaces, through telling stories, sharing anecdotes, and so on. It will be argued in this chapter that the handicraft activity studied afforded opportunities for discussion and interaction to shape and be shaped by panoramic spaces – in this case the life trajectory of one youth participant – and this was manifested in their shared, public activities.

In terms of the third concern – self and identity in relation to the world – emerging in the data are participants' diverse and co-constructed understandings of place, their sociocultural histories and experiences, as well as different ways of participating and relating to others, to the emerging activity and to the setting. van Lier (2004a, 2004b, 2008) draws on Neisser's (1988) five types of self-knowledge. These are ecological (self in this place, this activity), interpersonal (self in this human interchange), extended (self as personal experiences, memories, routines), private (self as different and unique) and conceptual (self as self-concept, identity, roles, status). Of these, in analysing the data presented in this chapter, how the youth involve themselves in the activity and interactionally manage relationships with other project group members are main concerns. The other types of self-knowledge – extended, private and conceptual – are potentially also relevant, although similar to the ecological and interpersonal selves, they are only referred to in the analysis when evoked and made public by the participants.

Related, too, to self and identity in the world, is Hawkins' (2014) notion of critical cosmopolitanism. We draw on this to consider how learners co-construct their perceptions of their world, and the affordances of this emergent aspect of the ecosystem for their learning. Cosmopolitanism considers relations between

global citizens, and the attitudes and obligations we have toward one another (Appiah, 2006). Critical cosmopolitanism takes into account issues of equity, power and positioning, such that interactions among and between diverse learners does not foster discord and divisiveness, but rather leads to openness and caring. It is understood as “a way forward that considers how to promote and support global encounters and engagements in a way that expands affiliations, openness, creativity, and caring with an imperative to create and sustain just and equitable relations” (p. 90). In this instance, it is the impetus behind the video-making and sharing, but it also applies to the situated interactions among the diverse learners in this site in the extracts we analyse.

Finally, van Lier's fourth concern – understanding learning in terms of adaptation to one's environment – is especially visible in the data in the ways that learners use the affordances of the art activity to manage these different selves and modes of identification. We conceive of learning as a process not only of building certain knowledge or skills in situated action and interaction, but also of socially constructing oneself and others as a certain person.

As a ‘world view’ of learning, an ecological approach also allows us to ask ‘bigger’ questions about what the ‘quality’ of educational experiences looks like and how it can be measured (Van Lier, 2004b). We will return to this more general concern in the concluding section of this text.

### 3. Methodology

As discussed in Moore (this volume), the IEP! project drew heavily on collaborative forms of ethnography (Lassiter, 2005). This chapter is an example of the collaborative work engaged in with the teenagers, with the design of the handcraft activity, the manipulation of the video recording equipment during the activity and the later editing of the video recordings being ‘owned’ by both the adult and the youth participants. The work is further guided by principles of reflective practice (e.g. Schön, 1983; Eraut, 1995); with the researchers simultaneously being educators in the project studied, they are able to reflect on emerging dynamics in order to develop deeper understandings of them, leading to improvement and innovation. Coherent with the underlying approach of the IEP! project, the researchers also take a transformative activist stance, as advocated by Vianna and Stetsenko (2014), in seeking to contribute to socially just educational opportunities and outcomes (Hawkins, 2011).

The research is further inspired by the emerging field of creative inquiry in language education research. Creative inquiry is often understood as “any social research or human inquiry that adapts the tenets of the creative arts as a part of

the methodology” (Leavy in Jones & Leavy, 2014, p. 1), although Bradley and Harvey (2019) offer a broader definition, to include research that is conducted *through* the arts, *with* the arts, and *into* the arts (see Moore, this volume). We follow Eisner’s (1985) definition of ‘art’ as spontaneous, aesthetic activity: “the process in which skills are employed to discover ends through actions” (p. 154). Arts-based methods – painting, drawing, photography, collage, drama, music, creative writing, dance, video production, among others – have proved effective in previous language education research for young people to explore their realities and imaginations in ways that extend beyond written and spoken expression (Bradley et al., 2018; Moore & Bradley, 2020). At the Global StoryBridges site where the data presented in this chapter was collected, creative practices were inherent to the processes of digital storytelling. We also frequently employed arts-based activities including dance, drawing or handicraft to promote the young people’s participation and learning through and of English. Following Piazzoli (2018), the educational context can be framed as an ecosystem in which students are engaged “as co-artists in a process involving not only cognition, but also affect, imagery, sensation, different forms of memory, emotion and embodiment” (p. 8).

The relationship and complementarities between arts-based approaches and ethnography, particularly in educational research, have also attracted scholarly interest in recent times. As Ferro and Poveda (2019) explain, “educational ethnographic research has turned its attention to learning, teaching and educational practices around art across a variety of institutional settings” (p. 2). For example, in an illuminating ethnographic study in a rural school in Spain, Vigo-Arrazola and Beach (2019) show how art is used by teachers to create a space where the learning and participation of children with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds and specific learning needs could be supported and researched.

The data we analyse in this chapter is a videorecorded interaction during the aforementioned card-making activity. Decisions to film the activity and about the position of the camera were shared by the adult facilitators – who were also IEP! researchers – and the young people. The analysis began with the repeated shared viewing of the data by the authors of this chapter, together with three of the other adult facilitators/researchers involved at the site. This initial analysis followed the ethnomethodological principle of unmotivated looking (Sacks, 1984), with viewers commenting on salient features of the observed activity and jointly building an initial analysis. After each initial hypothesis, researchers returned to the data to validate, discard, or extend it. In each iteration of viewing/reading and discussing, insights and understandings were refined. The data included in this chapter is a single stretch of interaction which stood out to

the researchers in terms of the emergent learning ecology following the shared analysis. This interaction has been transcribed using basic conversation analysis conventions (Jefferson, 2004), while also taking into account different embodied features of the interaction beyond talk – in particular gaze, facial expression, posture and gesture – which are essential to how participants build participation and meaning (e.g. Mondada, 2016; Norris, 2004). The role of a mobile phone in bringing written language into the interaction is also taken into account. While depending on the transcription to support the analysis in this chapter, during the analytical process the video data were constantly returned to as the first entextualisation of the phenomena under study (Haberland & Mortensen, 2016).

Ten young people were registered for the Global StoryBridges activity at our site at the time the data was collected. They were approximately 14 years-old and had a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, relevant aspects of which are introduced in Section 4 of this chapter to sustain our interpretations of the data. Informed consent was gathered from all of the young participants' parents or legal guardians prior to the start of this research, and pseudonyms are used for them throughout the analysis. In the extracts, activity facilitators (including Emilee Moore, one of the authors of this chapter) are referred to using their real names, with their permission. The second author of this chapter (Maggie Hawkins) is the developer and principal researcher of the Global StoryBridges project and was involved in all processes of data analysis, as well as having visited and being familiar with the site and its participants.

The digital storytelling activity ran once a week for two hours at a youth centre. The Global StoryBridges project works as an extracurricular programme in which children and youth at different global sites meet locally and collectively – per site – produce video stories representing different aspects of their lives, for audiences of children or youth – depending on the age cluster they are part of – at the other sites. These videos are shared on the project's web-based platform, which also includes an asynchronous chat facility used to post and respond to comments and questions about the video productions. The children and youth are supported by adult facilitators, who are usually volunteers, but the idea is that the project is youth-led, so the child and teenage participants make decisions about what to film, the stories to tell, and so on.

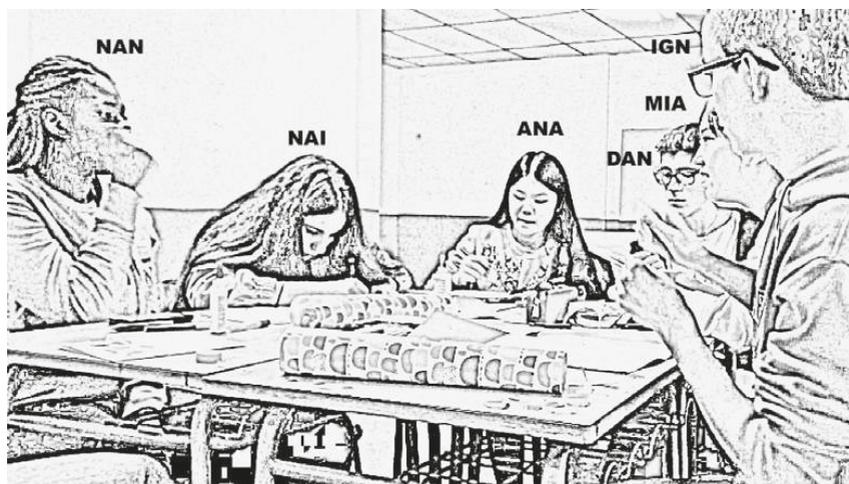
In a typical session at our site, different overlapping activities took place. Some of these activities were directly related to the Global StoryBridges project's main tasks of producing, sharing and commenting on digital stories. Other activities, including playing games, sharing music, dancing, drawing, handcraft and chatting, were also included in the sessions to promote positive relationships among participants and to create a relaxed learning space that the young people

would want to attend. Disruptive behaviour by some of the participants and in-group tensions were also quite common, and interaction in English was often difficult to initiate and sustain.

#### **4. Analysis: Affordances of an art-based approach for building opportunities for learning**

As we have alluded to already, the educational setting we study was oftentimes a challenging one and the opportunities for learning that were co-constructed, both in terms of the young people's English skills and more generally, were often difficult to gauge. The interaction presented in this section is embedded in activity – card-making and conversing while card-making – that allowed different modes of engagement. Some students joined in the conversation in English, others listened in and contributed quietly to the card-making, turns at talk were respected and disruptions were minimal. In that sense, the activity supported an ecosystem that was potentially generative of opportunities for the youths' learning.

The participants named in the transcription analysed and who are visible in the screenshot from the video recording (Image 1) are: NAN: Nanyamka (pseudonym, youth participant); NAI: Naiara (pseudonym, youth participant); ANA: Ana Li (pseudonym, youth participant); DAN: Daniel (pseudonym, youth participant); MIA: Miaomiao (a facilitator/PhD student from China); and IGN: Ignasi (pseudonym, youth participant). EMI: Emilee (a facilitator/researcher; first author here) and CLA: Claudia (a facilitator/researcher) also participate in the interaction but are not in the view of the camera (they are seated on the same side of the table as the camera).



**Image 1.** Screenshot from the video recording

We provide here some background details about the participants that are important for the interpretation of the data analysed. Firstly, Nanyamka is quite fluent in English as she was schooled in Ghana in that language before moving to Catalonia. She also speaks Fante. Ana Li also has a good level of English as she attends an after-school language college to learn it, unlike the other participants. She also studies Chinese at a complementary school on Saturdays. The other young people's English language skills are less developed. All of the young people speak Spanish and Catalan, although Spanish is dominant among them. Miaomiao speaks English but knows very little Spanish and no Catalan. Claudia and Emilee are both fluent in English, Spanish and Catalan.

All of the youth participants go to school together and although they come together for the project, they are not part of the same friendship groups. Indeed, throughout the year different tensions between them were brought to the adult facilitators' attention, both explicitly and through observation. Nanyamka and Naiara, on the one hand, and Ana Li, Daniel and Ignasi, on the other, were close friends, while there was tension between these two groups, and between Nanyamka and Ana Li in particular. The relationships between the youth often created obstacles for working collaboratively and also affected attendance; groups of friends tended to attend or skip sessions in block.

Both Claudia and Emilee were aware from a conversation before the project session studied that Miaomiao was curious about Ana Li's connections to

China, as part of her ethnographic research in the site. The fact that Ana Li was of Chinese descent and was adopted by her Spanish parents was common knowledge in the group, as was her learning of Chinese. Indeed, Miaomiao's presence in the different project sessions meant that China, and Asia in general, were main topics of discussion throughout the year, with the young people – Nanyamka and Naiara in particular – often asking Miaomiao about her country, Asian pop culture, food, etc. (see Zhang & Llopart, this volume). The interaction studied in this section took place at the end of the Christmas card-making session and Miaomiao had not yet asked Ana Li about her connections to China. Thus, Emilee and Claudia raise the topic in order to help Miaomiao find out more about Ana Li's relationship with her country of origin, balancing their joint roles as facilitators and researchers. Miaomiao's attention had mostly been consumed until this point by Nanyamka and throughout the extract analysed, in which Ana Li becomes the protagonist, Nanyamka closely monitors the conversation, shifting her gaze from speaker to speaker, without paying much attention to the card she is making.

Drawing on the ecology framework introduced earlier, the main foci of the analysis are: 1) how Ana Li's – and to a lesser extent Miaomiao's – life histories are co-constructed as a panoramic space affording potential for learning; 2) how the young people mobilise self-knowledge in the ways they manage their activity and their relationships; and 3) how the youth harness the emergent affordances of the handicraft for interactionally managing their engagement and alignment in the activity and with others. The data is presented as four different extracts to facilitate the analytical narrative, although they are all part of a continuous stretch of interaction.

The first extract begins with Emilee asking Ana Li if she has ever been to China.

### Extract 1

- 01 EMI ehm ana li did you ever go to china?  
 02 ANA ((making eye contact with EMI, eye contact sustained)) ah?  
 03 EMI have you ever been to China?  
 04 ANA que si he ido?  
       *whether i have been?*  
 05 EMI yeah with your parents?  
 06 ANA ((shakes head, looks down at card-making)) no.  
 07 EMI no? (.) would you like to go?  
 08 ANA ((looks up from card-making, smiles politely)) yes. ((looks  
 09 down at card-making))

- 10 MIA nanjing eh you were born in nanjing?  
 11 ANA ((looking up from card-making)) yes. ((looks down at card  
 12 making))  
 13 MIA nanjing is a big city.  
 14 ANA ((looks up from card-making briefly to MIA, nodding head))

After several lines in which Emilee and Ana Li make eye contact and clarify what Emilee is asking, Ana Li responds in line 6 that she has not been to China, both nonverbally by shaking her head and with a single “no”. As Ana Li answers, she looks back down at the card she is making. She looks up briefly in line 8 to respond with a single “yes” to Emilee’s next question about whether she would like to visit China, smiling politely, and again returns her gaze promptly to her handicraft. In line 10, Miaomiao asks Ana Li a third question, confirming the city Ana Li was born in (which had been mentioned in a previous session), and she receives a similar one-word response (“yes”) with brief eye contact in line 11. Miaomiao comments that Ana Li’s city of birth is a large one in line 13, receiving only a nonverbal response – eye-contact and nodding – from Ana Li in this case (line 14).

Extract 2 begins with Emilee asking Ana Li a fourth question, this time enquiring whether Ana Li has any memories of her birth country.

## Extract 2

- 15 EMI do you have memories in china?  
 16 ANA ((looks up from at card-making at EMI, question face, sustains  
 17 eye contact))  
 18 NAN ((to MIA)) can you write the [city that she come?  
 19 EMI [((to ANA)) do you have any memories of china?  
 20 ANA ((shaking head)) no. ((looks down at card-making))  
 21 MIA ((to NAN)) in chinese character?  
 22 NAN no in the alphabetical manner. ((to ANA, making eye contact))  
 23 cómo se- com- la ciudad cómo se llama?  
*how is- how- the city what's it called?*  
 24 ANA ((making eye contact with NAN)) qué ciudad?  
*which city?*  
 25 NAN de que la ciudad que naciste.  
*of which the city where you were born.*  
 26 ANA nanjing. ((maintains gaze on NAN))  
 27 NAN vale.  
*ok.*

- 28 MIA nan- i write it on my phone?  
 29 NAN oh yeah.  
 30 ANA pero para qué?  
     *but what for?*  
 31 NAN ((not looking at ANA)) ( )  
 32 ANA ((looks back to card-making))

Ana Li appears not to understand Emilee's question from line 15, as she looks up from her card-making with a questioning face in line 16. She sustains eye contact with Emilee in lines 16–20 as the question is repeated (line 19), and then she responds with a single “no” and a head shake, before looking back down to her card (line 20).

In line 18, a different conversational sequence is opened up by Nanyamka, who, as mentioned previously, had dominated the talk, with Miaomiao in particular, until the adults' attention turned to Ana Li. Typical of her interest in China (see Zhang & Llompert, this volume), but also possibly as a way of directing Miaomiao's attention back to herself, Nanyamka asks Miaomiao to write down the name of the city that Ana Li comes from. Miaomiao clarifies whether Nanyamka wants to see the city written in Chinese characters (line 21), to which Nanyamka responds in line 22 that she means using the (Romanised) alphabetical system (i.e. Pinyin). In this same line, Nanyamka asks Ana Li to repeat the name of the city where she was born, opening up an exchange in Spanish that lasts until line 30. Ana Li repeats the name of the city for Nanyamka (line 26), while she also enquires with certain suspicion as to why Nanyamka wants this information (line 30). Nanyamka gives her a reason, which is not understandable in the recording (line 31), but which seems to satisfy Ana Li as nonintrusive, as Ana Li returns her gaze to her card-making in line 32.

Meanwhile, Miaomiao, who speaks little Spanish and likely does not understand the conversation that has emerged between Ana Li and Nanyamka, asks Nanyamka if she would like her to write down the name of the Chinese city by typing it on her phone (line 28), which Nanyamka agrees to (line 29).

Extract 3 begins with another one of the adults, Claudia, asking Ana Li a fifth question about her age when she was brought to Spain.

## Extract 3

- 33 CLA ana li did you come as a baby?  
 34 ANA ((looks up from card-making)) yes. (.) one year.  
 35 CLA wow  
 36 ANA ((smiles politely, looks back down at card-making))  
 37 NAN ((looking across the table, at nobody in particular)) pero  
 38 cuando vas a adoptar una persona tienes que ir a ese país para  
 39 buscar el bebé?  
*but when you are going to adopt a person do you have to go to  
 that country to collect the baby?*
- 40 MIA ((shows phone to NAN)) [nanjing  
 41 IGN [depende. (.) depende.  
*[it depends. (.) it depends.*
- 42 ANA [(laughing)) no (.) van volando solos  
*no (.) they go flying alone*
- 43 NAN [(to MIA, looking at phone)) ah ok.  
 44 IGN no pero-  
*no but-*
- 45 ANA con una cigüeña que los va a buscar.  
*with a stork that goes to get them.*
- 46 ((laughter from ANA, MIA, IGN, DAN, EMI and CLA))  
 47 NAI pero te pueden traer al bebé.  
*but they could bring you the baby.*
- 48 NAN sí pueden ir a un centro y los traen directamente.  
*yes you could go to a centre and they bring them directly.*
- 49 ANA pero a ver. (.) es que allí los centros están en china por eso.  
*but let's see. (.) the thing is that there the centres are in  
 china that's why.*
- 50 NAN pero es que hua  
*but it's that hua*
- 51 ((overlapping talk))

In responding to the question, Ana Li again looks up from her card-making, although this time offering a longer response than to previous interrogations (“yes, one year”, line 34). She sustains eye contact with Claudia during Claudia's next turn, in which Claudia shows her amazement at Ana Li's young age of arrival in Spain (line 35). In line 36, Ana Li smiles politely and looks back down to her card-making.

In lines 37–39, Nanyamka again proposes a topic for discussion linked to Ana Li's life history, asking a question related to the theme of adoption (i.e. whether

you need to collect adopted babies in their countries of birth). The fact that she uses Spanish suggests her question is directed at her peers (she usually uses English with the adults), although not to any particular one. Ignasi responds in line 41 that “it depends” (“depende”), also using Spanish. Ana Li, who is arguably the expert on the topic through her unique experience, responds in Spanish to Nanyamka’s question with sarcasm in lines 42 and 45, prompting laughter from all the young people except for Nanyamka and Naiara, as well as from the adults, in line 46. Naiara steps in at this point (line 47), also using Spanish, to defend Nanyamka against this potentially face-threatening situation, and Nanyamka offers her own self-defence for her question in line 48. In line 49, Ana Li mobilises her expertise on the matter of adoption to explain why Nanyamka and Naiara are mistaken, to which Nanyamka responds with dismissive frustration in line 50 (“hua”).

At the end of Extract 3 the youth talk in overlap, leading to Ignasi’s next turn at the beginning of Extract 4, in which he uses an imperative in Spanish (“escúchame”, translated as “listen to me”) to claim attention.

#### Extract 4

- 52 **IGN** a ver escúchame.  
*let's see listen to me.*
- 53 **NAN** [((looking at IGN, exaggerated laughing))
- 54 **IGN** [a ver escúchame porque no me acuerdo si cuando lo hacíamos  
 55 en el cole si esto se doblaba así.  
*[let's see listen to me because i don't remember if when we did it at school this was folded like this.*
- 56 **MIA** [((asks ANA a question but can't be heard over NAN's laughing))
- 57 **ANA:** ((to NAN, raising arm to get her attention, laughs slightly))  
 58 es que no la escucho.  
*it's that i can't hear her.*
- 59 **MIA** do you want your parents take you back to china?
- 60 **ANA** yes.

Although his face is offscreen at the beginning of the extract, Ignasi’s use of the second person singular (tú) form of the verb ‘escuchar’ (listen) rather than the second person plural (vosotros) suggests he is addressing one person in particular, possibly Nanyamka. Looking at him, in line 53 Nanyamka laughs in an exaggerated way. In overlap, Ignasi repeats the ‘tú’ form of ‘listen’, before changing the topic. He refers to the technique he has been using to make a pop-up Christmas tree on his card, which the youth had apparently learned at school

(lines 54–55). Also in overlap, Miaomiao asks Ana Li another question, in English, which cannot be heard over Nanyamka's loud laughing (line 56). In lines 57–58, Ana Li raises her hand towards Nanyamka and tells her she cannot hear Miaomiao. She laughs slightly as she does so, possibly seeking solidarity from other participants. The move is effective, as Nanyamka stops laughing and Miaomiao and Ana Li are able to ask (line 59) and answer (line 60) the question in English about Ana Li's desire to visit China in the future.

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

We first return to the three main foci set out above, in order to summarise the main analytical findings: 1) how Ana Li's – and to a lesser extent Miaomiao's – life histories are co-constructed as a panoramic space affording potential for learning; 2) how the young people mobilise self-knowledge in the ways they manage their activity and their relationships; and 3) how the youth harness the emergent affordances of the handicraft for interactionally managing their engagement and alignment in the activity and with others.

In terms of the first, the analysis suggests that despite not being a topic proposed by the youth themselves, the conversation around Ana Li's adoption from China offers potential for learning. We observe, for example, how Nanyamka seeks clarification of, and then asks for the name of Ana Li's city of birth to be written out for her, as a way of showing her interest in and building her knowledge of China. In this exchange, her plurilingual literacy knowledge is also mobilised, as two different writing systems are offered to her as possibilities from which to select. Perhaps more importantly, Nanyamka's question about adoption procedures leads to a debate in which all of the youth, with the exception of Daniel, voice their ideas, with Nanyamka and Naiara defending one position, Ignasi another, and Ana Li a third. Ana Li, the only participant with firsthand experience of the procedure, is ultimately able to exert her co-constructed position of expertise in claiming authority, and in resolving the debate. Linking with the second analytical focus, she is able to mobilise her extended self-knowledge, her personal experience, to position herself, and be accepted as, the more knowledgeable participant.

Continuing to consider the second analytical focus, the mobilisation of self-knowledge, we observe how social relations and tensions among the youth preexisting the particular interaction studied are oriented to by them in the conversation and affect their engagements and alignments. Ana Li displays suspicion as to Nanyamka's reasons for wanting to know the name of her city of birth. Naiara, who otherwise does not participate verbally in the conversation, speaks

up only to show support for Nanyamka's position in the debate about adoption processes. We further observe how Ignasi steps in when tensions arise to change the topic. Both in the case of Naiara's non-participation in the conversation other than to momentarily defend Nanyamka, and in Ignasi's change of topic to card-folding techniques, the youths' concentration – as evidenced by their shifting gaze and posture – on the handicraft activity is central, offering them a way to not get involved in the conversation, in Naiara's case, and to prompt a refocus of attention, in Ignasi's.

These latter two observations are examples of how the youth are able to harness the affordances of the arts-based activity to manage their activity and their relationships, as part of an ecosystem from which learning, including learning English, may emerge. The activity allows the young people to use an array of multimodal resources to enact engagement/alignment and interpersonal relations, and in the process they have the opportunity to use English and to build their knowledge of one another and the world. The affordances of the art activity are also used by Ana Li to only minimally participate in the conversation by giving just token answers to the adults' questions. Indeed, Ana Li only seems to actively engage in the talk in responding sarcastically to Nanyamka's enquiries. Both the preexisting relationships between the youth and the topic of conversation no doubt contribute to creating an ecology which could be uncomfortable for some of the participants. However, the handicraft activity affords opportunities for engaging differently with numerous unfolding activities and for aligning or avoiding/resisting alignment with other participants.

van Lier (2008) writes: "activity [...] guides the perception of affordances, and the affordances themselves guide further activity" (p. 61). Indeed, the analysis reveals how, in the after-school digital storytelling project, one activity (card making) affords another (questions/answers about Ana Li's life history) and another (relationship management) and another (learning about China, mobilising literacy knowledge, learning about adoption processes), as well as different forms of engagement and alignment by the youth.

In this chapter, the out-of-school digital storytelling activity was presented as one of several initiatives being collaboratively implemented as part of the IEP! project, aimed at offering equitable and quality out-of-school educational opportunities for developing youths' English language competences. The specific affordances of the activity analysed have already been discussed. In responding to the question about the young people's learning in a more general sense, we return to van Lier (2004b), who argues that 'quality' of educational experience cannot be measured against standards or test scores, and that some

of the most significant indicators of quality cannot be measured quantitatively. He writes:

in education there are activities that reap and others that sow. The reaping type of activities tend to be those that are immediately demonstrable and perhaps testable, such as clearly defined skills (the ability to use *ser* and *estar* correctly in a Spanish exercise), but the sowing activities tend to bear fruit much later, possibly in ways that can no longer be traced back to the original sowing event. In the latter case there is of course no way of quantifying the effect of these sowing events. (van Lier, 2004b, p. 98)

Indeed, the data presented in this chapter do not allow any precise claims about how the youths' English skills progressed, or about how they developed other competences, including critical cosmopolitanism, to be made. Rather, the instance of interaction studied, as well as the many other interactions documented through our research at the site, may have sown seeds – including cultivating interest in other people and places, promoting convivial relationships with peers and encouraging multiple forms of engagement and participation – which will hopefully bear fruit in the youths' futures as lifelong (language) learners. No doubt there remains work to be done on behalf of the project facilitators in picking up on the ecological affordances identified and maximising their potential for young people's critical cosmopolitanism and language learning.

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Miaomiao Zhang / Júlia Llompart Esbert

## Participant roles in linguistic mediation activities in a digital storytelling project

**Abstract** This chapter will examine the collaborative, multimodal and plurilingual construction of the mediation activity between Catalan youth and a Chinese adult in the context of an out-of-school digital storytelling project. Following Goffman's (1981) approach to participation frameworks and Wadensjö's (1995) insights into interpreting activities, we analyse the participant roles deployed dynamically and multimodally in interaction in order to, on the one hand, facilitate communication and the progressivity of the interaction and, on the other hand, to focus on the linguistic form. The results shed light on how participation status is constructed and roles and responsibilities are distributed in a specific multilingual and multicultural context. Moreover, the analysis shows how an inanimate participant – a laptop computer with the Google Translate tool – is afforded the role of animator and reporter in the interaction and functions as an active participant in the encounter. We contribute to understandings of the complexity of linguistic mediation, its connection with digital technologies and its possible role in plurilingual education and the development of competences for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Keywords:** linguistic mediation, computer-mediated communication, machine translation, plurilingualism, participation framework

### 1. Introduction

Globalisation and technological advancements in recent decades have brought about profound sociodemographic and sociolinguistic changes. Among these, the ways people live and communicate with each other, both locally and translocally (Appadurai, 1996), have been diversified, including through the use of Internet and other digital technologies. These major changes have necessarily promoted reflection on the conception of language education for children and youth, and official documents and educational curricula and programmes in Europe have incorporated new competences to be developed, including plurilingual and pluricultural competence in general, linguistic mediation in particular, and digital competence.

Regarding the first of these, European framework documents and recommendations for language teaching, learning and assessment include plurilingual and pluricultural competence as a general requirement for all

language learners (see the *Common European framework of reference for languages* or CEFR, Council of Europe, 2001; Council of the European Union, 2019). In our local context, the CEFR has been incorporated into primary and secondary education curricula that include plurilingual and intercultural competence (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2019, for the compulsory secondary education curriculum). Being and becoming a competent plurilingual, according to the CEFR, implies developing mediation competence (see Council of Europe, 2018) for managing contact with other languages and cultures. Mediation in the CEFR includes cross-linguistic mediation (e.g. translating information in one language into another language), as well as other processes of communication and learning involving an intermediary. It emphasises the “co-construction of meaning in interaction” and the “constant movement between the individual and social level in language learning” (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 33). Finally, accompanying educational consensus about the need to promote contact with other cultures and language learning, importance has been given to the development of digital competence. In our local context, this competence should be developed in schools as a transversal aspect of curricula, with a focus on digital tools and their applications, the treatment of information and the organisation of work and learning environments, interpersonal communication and collaboration, and civic skills and digital ID (Departament d’Ensenyament, 2015).

Despite the presence of these three aspects – plurilingual and pluricultural competence, mediation and digital competence – in official recommendations and school curricula, previous research suggests that formal education is often bound by monolingual and monocultural approaches (Llopart & Nussbaum, 2018), does not contemplate mediation in the terms set out by the CEFR (Alcaraz-Mármol, 2019) and does not fully take into account students’ real-life skills, practices and realities regarding digital technologies (European Commission, 2019). In responding to these gaps, in this chapter, we analyse the mediation activities – and their connection with plurilingual, pluricultural and digital competences – that emerged in the Global StoryBridges (GSB) after-school digital storytelling activity, one of the initiatives set up as part of the IEP! project (see Moore, this volume; Moore & Hawkins, this volume).

The data that we analyse in this chapter was collected in 2019 when a Chinese facilitator of the GSB activity, Miaomiao (one of the authors of this chapter), had recently arrived in Catalonia and in the project. Specifically, we analyse an interaction that emerged during one of the first sessions in which Miaomiao participated. In the interaction, the youth instigate the use of a machine-translation tool (i.e. Google Translate) in interacting with Miaomiao. The objectives of this chapter are to: 1) describe the resulting interaction in detail in order to

understand its complexity; and 2) analyse the cross-linguistic mediation activities carried out – especially by one of the youth – and their relationship with plurilingualism and language teaching and learning. In Sections 2 and 3 of the chapter, we present the theoretical framework used for understanding these mediation activities and the participation frameworks from which they emerge. In Section 4, we introduce the data and some methodological considerations for the analysis. In Section 5, we proceed to analyse the data and, finally, we offer a closing discussion in Section 6.

## **2. Linguistic mediation within a digitally-enhanced learning context**

Linguistic mediation is a prominent activity in many facets of social life (e.g. in healthcare, in the legal system), although our focus here are multilingual and multicultural contexts. In such scenarios, people who have more linguistic or cultural know-how often take on the role of interpreters or translators across languages, also functioning as interpersonal and cultural mediators during the interpreting or translation process (Virkkula-Räisänen, 2010). More specifically, we are interested in cross-linguistic mediation in interactions involving youth. Research on youths' cross-linguistic mediation has mainly focused on language brokering (Tse, 1996): the translation and interpreting activities that children and youth from migrant-origin families undertake mainly for their families, teachers, neighbors and other adults. Less attention has been paid to the mediation activities carried out among youth (see however, Orellana, 2003) and their connection with language learning.

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the plurilingual turn in language education represented in the first version of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) led to attention being paid to mediation as part of plurilingual and pluricultural competence. Mediating activities and strategies – in their oral and written forms – are briefly described in the first framework document as necessary for acquiring language proficiency. However, mediation is developed more fully in the more recent *CEFR companion volume* (Council of Europe, 2018). In this latter document, mediation is described as a communicative language activity, together with reception, production and interaction. More specifically, mediation occurs when “the user/learner acts as a social agent who creates bridges and helps to construct or convey meaning, sometimes within the same language, sometimes from one language to another” (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 103); mediation is thus not limited to cross-linguistic activities. In the *CEFR companion volume*, the focus is on the processes of creating space and

conditions for communication and/or learning, collaborating to construct new meaning, encouraging others to construct or understand new meaning, and passing on new information in an appropriate form (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 103). Mediation is divided into three main activities: mediating a text, mediating concepts and mediating communication. Although mediation activities are increasingly considered in language teaching and learning, there are still significant gaps in understandings of this complex activity. It is further important to mention that online interaction is also emphasised in the *CEFR companion volume*, in which relying on online translation tools to facilitate conversation and discussion is described as a means for basic level language learners to develop their language competences.

From an interactional point of view, a number of scholars have researched the intricacies of interlinguistic mediation (Wadensjö, 1995, 1998; Merlino & Mondada, 2013; Merlini & Favaron, 2003; Pöchhacker, 2012; among others) as a polyfunctional activity aimed at two main objectives. According to Wadensjö (1995), the first of these objectives is the maintenance of mutual comprehension and intersubjectivity – that is, facilitating the progression of interaction (Heritage, 2007; Schegloff, 2006). More specifically, the term intersubjectivity could refer to participants' joint actions for solving communication difficulties or misunderstandings emerging in the interaction (Heritage, 2007). The second objective of interlinguistic mediation is the translation of content. According to Merlino and Mondada (2013), interlinguistic mediation can imply multiple activities and multiple identities and categories – such as 'translator', 'moderator' or 'animator' – which are constructed in a dynamic way in interaction. In this sense, interlinguistic mediation activity is integrated in the ongoing interaction, configures a specific participation framework and is organised by interlocutors (Merlino & Mondada, 2013). Also from an interactionist perspective, Wadensjö (1995) defines interlinguistic mediation as a dialogical and bidirectional activity among speaker(s) and hearer(s) in interaction, which also entails coordination and different ways of participating.

Most of the research cited in this section considers animate participants as speaker(s) and hearer(s) in interaction, but the digital revolution has had a significant impact on communication. Computer mediated communication (CMC) is nowadays an important part of daily life and "encompasses various forms of human communication through networked computers" (Lee & Oh, 2015). CMC also frequently happens in face-to-face interaction alongside other communicative modes, such as spoken language, gesture, posture, etc. Research has zoomed in on how individuals orient to technological artefacts around them, showing how these artefacts are afforded some of the interactional properties of

human participants. For instance, as Molina-Markham et al. (2016) indicated, when observing the interaction between a driver and an in-car speech-enabled system, the driver humanised the machine by saying “you can do it baby!” when trying to encourage the system to display its functions well. Similar phenomena are observed in our data, as shall be seen in the analytical section of the chapter.

As one prominent form of CMC, machine translation (MT) is a powerful tool for multilingual groups and offers affordances for overcoming cultural and linguistic barriers in interactive collaboration. Indeed, MT is increasingly used, together with other resources such as gesture, for enabling plurilingual communication (Pituxcoosuvarn et al., 2018). Although nowadays there are various online MT resources available, Google Translate is one of the most common online resources used for translation, with over 200 million daily users (Shankland, 2013). It is also the MT tool that is used by the youth in the interaction studied in this chapter. There are three types of technology included in Google Translate: translation, text-to-speech (TTS) and automatic-speech-recognition (ASR). In this chapter, we consider the role of the Google Translate tool, and of the translation and TTS functions in particular, in mediation activities.

### **3. Participation in linguistic mediation**

Interlinguistic mediation – including that involving digital tools – implies the emergence of a particular participation framework which modifies the traditional speaker-hearer model. Goffman’s (1981) distinction between the participation framework – that is, all people present in the interaction – and the production and reception formats have been useful to analyse the data presented in this chapter. Regarding the production format, Goffman identified three roles: animator, who performs the utterance or gives voice to it; author, who composes the utterance; and principal, who is responsible or accountable for the utterance (Watson & Goffman, 1984). Goffman’s work on production formats mainly focuses on the speaker, who can fulfil one or a combination of these three roles in order to achieve certain goals (see also Virkkula-Räisänen, 2010).

Participation is co-constructed by multiple parties, none of whom should be overlooked in interaction. Building on Goffman’s framework, Goodwin and Goodwin (2004) demonstrate that in interaction “different kinds of parties build action together by participating in structured ways in the events” (p. 225). Their notion of participation grants the hearer the cognitive capacity to contribute to the ongoing talk. Speaker and hearer co-build the complex and changing context through utterances and actions. Both the talk of the speaker and the visible embodied behaviours displayed by the hearer contribute to the construction of

an utterance. All in all, this framework investigates “how multiple parties build action together while both attending to, and helping to construct, relevant action and context” (Goodwin & Goodwin, 2004, p. 240).

Within interpreting studies, Wadensjö’s work has also built on Goffman’s notion of production format. Wadensjö (2014) identified the dynamic role(s) of the interpreter in interpreting activities. These are: reporter, recapitulator, and responder. When acting as a reporter, an interpreter takes on the role of the animator of another’s utterance. When acting as a recapitulator and responder, the interpreter takes on the role of author of another’s utterance (Wadensjö, 2017). In order to offer a deeper understanding of the interpreter’s role, Wadensjö (2017) adopted an “interactionistic, non-normative, dialogical” (p. 111) approach where the building of and the responsibility for the interpreting activity is shared – that is, there is mutual feedback. Indeed, primary participants (i.e. those whose words are being interpreted) can achieve some mutual understanding through gaze and backchannel responses even though they do not have access to each other’s language (Vranjes et al., 2018).

In this study, we analyse participation in linguistic mediation activities of animate actors, but we also focus on the role of the Google Translate tool, as a non-human interpreter that shares similarities and differences with human interpreters. Studies using the notion of participation framework to analyse such a non-human interpreter’s role are quite rare. A recent study conducted by İközöğlü (2019) illustrates that a voice-based mobile phone translation application functions as a participant in interaction to some extent, taking on roles similar to those of animator and principal.

#### **4. Methodology and data**

The data selected for this chapter are four interactional extracts transcribed following a simplified version of Jeffersonian conventions (Jefferson, 2004) and including multimodal features for a holistic understanding of the interaction. The extracts are from the second weekly session of the GSB after-school digital storytelling activity in which one of the authors, Miaomiao, took part. Similar to other sites within the IEP! project, the research was guided by collaborative forms of ethnography (Lassiter, 2005) and reflective practice (e.g. Schön, 1983; Eraut, 1995), as the researchers were also the facilitators of the after-school activity (see Moore, this volume).

The session examined in this chapter included seven people: three adult facilitators – two experienced researchers (Emilee, EMI; Claudia, CLA) and one PhD student (Miaomiao, MIA) – and four youth participants, who were

approximately 14 years-old at the time (Nanyamka, NAM; Naiara, NAI; Sara, SAR; Julián, JUL). (Note that while adult names have been maintained, with their permission, youth names have been anonymised.) This is a linguistically and culturally diverse group, since Emilee is originally from Australia, Claudia from Chile, Miaomiao from China, Nanyamka from Ghana and the other three students from Catalonia. Nanyamka was born and schooled in an English-medium school in Ghana as a young child, before migrating to Catalonia, and she can speak English quite fluently. In many cases, since the other young participants' English level is lower than Nanyamka's, they draw on her for help to translate between Spanish – the main language used by the youth when communicating with each other – and English. Miaomiao had only recently arrived in Catalonia and had limited proficiency in Spanish and high proficiency in English at the time of the research. Her presence generated interest and curiosity among the young participants about what they consider to be 'Chinese' or 'Asian' culture. They engaged with Miaomiao often on this topic, drawing on their knowledge and interests. The young participants access Chinese and Asian culture through digital technologies and global social networks, such as YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, etc., and take an interest in language, food, music, movies, and fashion. Nanyamka is an expert in Chinese and Asian culture (as well as what is referred to by the youth as 'African' culture, thanks to her roots in Ghana), and she is willing to transmit her cultural knowledge to her peers. In this sense, she often takes on the role of linguistic and/or cultural mediator to facilitate communication between the young people and Miaomiao. In the extracts that we analyse in this chapter, Nanyamka takes on this mediator role, but also uses a laptop computer used for the after-school activity in the interaction. Specifically, the extracts involve the Google Translate tool to communicate with Miaomiao.

The GSB after-school activity involves the production and sharing via a web-based platform of digital stories with youth at other global sites. While engaging in this process, the youth participants also regularly deviated from the main task to focus on other interests. Prior to the interactional extracts that we analyse in the next section, the adult facilitators were guiding the youth to brainstorm and type into a word-processing programme on the laptop computer a list of places or events in their town that might be filmed for their digital stories. While doing so, their keen interest in China and Asia emerged and they started to ask Miaomiao about her family, schooling, life experience, interests, language, and so on. In doing so, rather than communicate with Miaomiao directly in English, the youth engage the Google Translate tool on the laptop computer to communicate with her in Chinese. In this sense, they rely on two main functions offered by this tool for Mandarin Chinese to communicate with Miaomiao: pinyin, the

Romanised system or ‘spell sound’ that automatically appears below the Chinese characters when using the translation function; and the text-to-speech (TTS) function that reads the translation in the target language (i.e. Chinese) out loud when clicking on the sound box.

The analysis in the next section draws on the study of participation from an interactional and multimodal perspective (Goffman, 1981; Goodwin & Goodwin, 2004) – and on the specific contributions on interpreting interactions put forward by Wadensjö (2014, 2017) – to describe the emergence, development and characteristics of computer-mediated linguistic mediation activity.

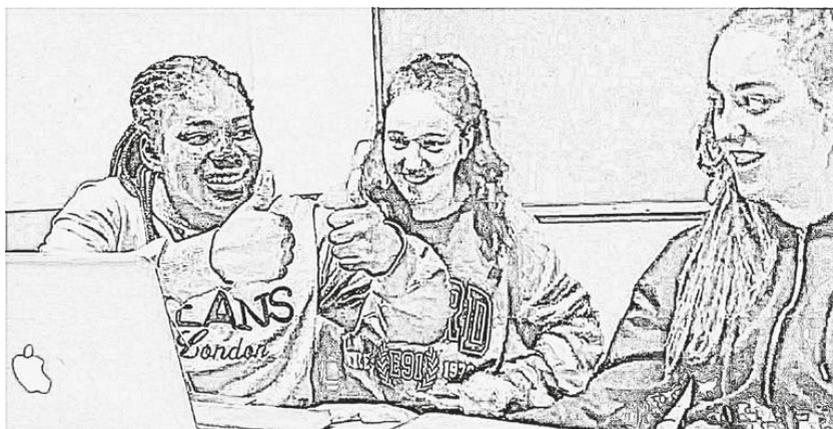
## 5. Data analysis

In the first extract, the two students facing the computer – Nanyamka and Naiara – have opened Google Translate and type a first sentence to be presented to Miaomiao who cannot see the screen, and who is paying attention to what Sara is trying to tell her.

### Extract 1

- 01 NAN ((typing)) *queremos grabar en la costa de (name of town)*  
*we want to record in the coast of (name of town)*
- 02 (..)
- 03 NAI *women xiang: jilu [(name of town) ((looking at the screen))]*  
*we want to record in the coast of (name of town)*
- 04 NAN [dónde está:  
*where is*
- 05 NAI ((moving hand towards screen)) *aquí está:*  
*here it is*
- 06 NAN *sí pero dónde es (.) para que se escuche*  
*yes but where is (.) so that it can be heard*
- 07 NAI ((points at computer screen, looks for button, presses play))
- 08 COM *women xiang [jilu (name of town) de haian]*  
*we want to record on the coast of (name of town)*
- 09 NAN NAI [((look at MIA))
- 10 NAI ((pointing her finger at MIA))

- 11 JUL ((looks at MIA))
- 12 NAI ((laughs, looks at computer))
- 13 NAN ((looks at computer)) a ver qué dice ella ((presses play))  
*let's see what she says*
- 14 COM [women xiang [jilu (name of town) de haian  
*we want to record on the coast of (name of town)*
- 15 NAN [((looks at MIA))
- 16 MIA [((leans in and approaches computer))
- 17 MIA ah: [((leaning back))
- 18 NAI SAR [((look at MIA))
- 19 (..)
- 20 NAN ((two thumbs up looking at MIA))
- 21 MIA that it's not correct
- 22 NAN ah
- 23 NAI SAR  
JUL CLA [((laugh))
- 24 NAN [((pretending to hit computer)) ME HAS FALLADO ((presses play))  
*you let me down*
- 25 COM women xiang jilu (name of town) de haian  
*we want to record on the coast of (name of town)*
- 26 NAN NAI  
SAR ((looking at computer))
- 27 MIA (name of town) ((laughs)) (name of town)
- 28 NAN NAI  
SAR ((look at MIA))
- 29 EMI ((laughs))
- 30 NAN ((putting two thumbs up, see Image 1)) understand?
- 31 MIA yeah
- 32 EMI what did it say?
- 33 NAI queremos grabar en la costa de (name of town) ((laughs))  
*we want to record on the coast of (name of town)*
- 34 NAN ((laughs))
- 35 EMI en la costa de (name of town) ((laughs))  
*in the coast of (name of town)*



**Image 1.** Screenshot taken at line 30, Extract 1

The extract begins with Nanyamka typing a statement into the Google Translate application and with Naiara, in line 3, trying to read the translation offered by the tool. In overlap, Nanyamka is looking for the button allowing the tool to read the Chinese sentence aloud and Naiara responds to her demand by indicating where it is, in line 5. Nanyamka continues the search for the specific button, that finally is multimodally indicated by Naiara, in line 7, when she points to it on the screen and presses the play button. The computer begins to say the sentence in Chinese (in line 8) while Naiara, in overlap, multimodally indicates who the sentence is directed to: Miaomiao. This is reinforced by the gaze of all the youth directed to Miaomiao, in lines 9 and 11, right after Naiara has pressed the play button. After the TTS function plays the translation, there is silence and no answer from Miaomiao, which Naiara and Nanyamka (who look at the computer – COM – in lines 12 and 13) interpret as a need to play the Chinese sentence again. Nanyamka states, in line 13, her aim clearly in Spanish – to receive a reaction from Miaomiao, “a ver qué dice ella” (“let’s see what she says”) – and then presses play. The sentence is reproduced again by the computer and, right after that, Nanyamka looks at Miaomiao, awaiting an answer. Miaomiao partly responds to this demand, in line 17, by briefly responding (“ah”), indicating that she has heard the sentence. After a pause, Nanyamka multimodally – with two thumbs up and looking at Miaomiao – seeks Miaomiao’s reaction to the Chinese sentence, which comes in line 21, when Miaomiao gives a negative evaluation of the machine’s translation. On the one hand, it seems she has not heard it correctly

and, on the other, the word “haian” (meaning “coast”) is quite rare in Chinese. Thus, Miaomiao focuses on the linguistic form of the computer’s utterance, responding “that it’s not correct” in line 21. Nanyamka, in line 22, seems to align with Miaomiao’s focus on the form offered by the Google Translate tool. This is clearer when, while Naiara, Sara, Julián and Claudia are laughing, Nanyamka, in line 24, displays a disappointed expression and yells at the computer in Spanish for its mistake saying “me has fallado” (“you let me down”), pretending to hit it. Nevertheless, she gives it another chance by again pressing play (in line 24). After the tool voices the sentence again in line 25, Miaomiao responds by repeating the name of the town and laughing, which might show her understanding of the sentence. Nanyamka, Naiara and Sara look at Miaomiao, in line 28, and Nanyamka produces a request for confirmation from Miaomiao about her understanding of the sentence, both verbally (“understand?”) and non-verbally, raising two thumbs (see Image 1). Miaomiao confirms her understanding in line 31 (“yeah”). Since Emilee cannot see the screen and does not understand Chinese, she asks for the meaning of the sentence (“what did it say?”, line 32), which is given by Naiara in Spanish “queremos grabar en la costa de [name of town]” (“we want to record on the coast of [name of town]”).

In this extract we have observed a collaboratively constructed multimodal and plurilingual interaction among the youth, Miaomiao (the Chinese facilitator), and the other adult facilitators, in which linguistic mediation activity is crucial. During the interaction the participation framework and roles are flexible and co-constructed. The youth multimodally construct, first, the production format, by adding the Google Translate tool and Nanyamka and Naiara’s collaborative writing of the utterance to be translated into it. Nanyamka and Naiara are the authors, as well as the principals, and the computer is the animator, since it mainly works as a ‘sounding-box’. Second, the youth initiate the construction of the reception format, by directing their gaze to Miaomiao and pointing at her. Miaomiao accepts this reception format by leaning into the computer. Meanwhile, the computer is also ratified as hearer by hearing through the written text, thus functioning as a reporter. In this sense, the computer acts as linguistic mediator, but it depends on the youths’ mediational activity, in a more general sense, in the social construction of the participation framework, as well as their agency in deciding when to allow the translation tool to reproduce utterances, in order to fulfil this role.

Furthermore, a dual focus of the human participants’ attention can be observed in the extract: the intended content of the message and the correction of the linguistic form. Although it is not clear if Nanyamka, with two thumbs up, prioritises one or the other focus – or both – in line 20, Miaomiao’s focus

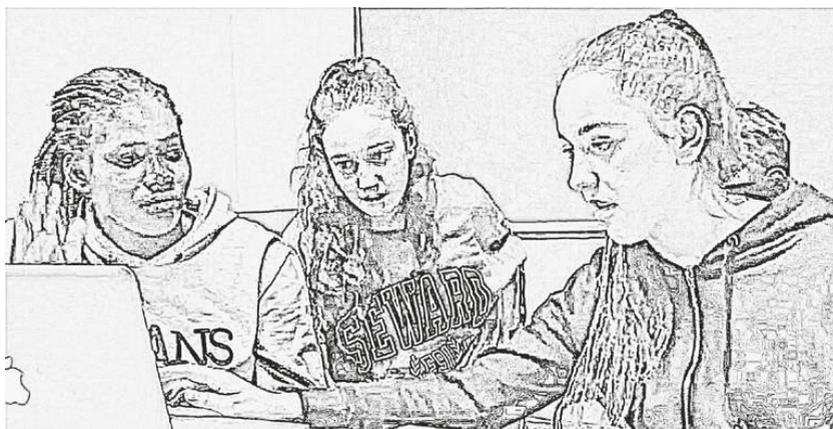
is on the form. By negatively assessing the computer's performance, Miaomiao does not ratify it as a valid participant and linguistic mediator, which leads to Nanyamka's disappointment with the tool, which she humanises when saying "me has fallado" ("you let me down"). Similar phenomena have been observed in Molina-Markham et al. (2016), whose study on the interaction between a driver and in-car speech-enabled system showed that the driver talked to the machine in a humanised way. Despite this, Nanyamka insists on positioning the computer as a linguistic mediator and looks for Miaomiao's ratification (see Image 1) of this, thereby collaboratively ratifying the computer as a participant.

Thus, in this first extract, the schema of the participation framework is established. In Extract 2, the youth continue with the project of trying to communicate with Miaomiao through the computer-based translation tool. They focus here on simple greetings.

### Extract 2

- 36 NAN        **hi (.) pone hi**  
                  *hi (.) it says hi*
- 37 NAI        **hi**
- 38 NAN        **no seria ni hao? ((looking at MIA))**  
                  *wouldn't it be ni hao*
- 39 MIA        **ni hao**  
                  *hello*
- 40 NAI        **pero que es español ((leaning to computer, touching keyboard))**  
                  *but this is spanish*
- 41 NAN        **ai (.) hello (.) hola**  
                  *oh (.) hello (.) hi*
- 42 MIA        **hola**  
                  *hello*
- 43 NAN        **ni hao**  
                  *hello*
- 44 NAI        **ni hao**  
                  *hello*
- 45 MIA        **yeah**
- 46             **(.)**
- 47 NAI        **y adiós?**  
                  *and goodbye*

- 48 SAR ((presses play))
- 49 COM ni hao  
*hello*
- 50 NAN ((hand in greeting position, Image 2))
- 51 NAN ((typing)) es la única forma que nos podemos comunicar ((looking at EMI))  
*this is the only way we can communicate*
- 52 NAI ((approches computer)) (zai ian)  
*goodbye*
- 53 NAN no ((presses play))
- 54 COM zaijian  
*goodbye*
- 55 NAN ((looks at MIA)) ((looks at JUL)) madre mía la diferencia eh  
*oh my goodness the difference eh*
- 56 JUL le has dicho adiós?  
*you told her goodbye?*
- 57 NAI [zaijian (.) zai- zai-  
*goodbye (.) good- good-*
- 58 (.)
- 59 JUL [qué mala gente NAN  
*you are a bad person NAN*
- 60 NAI [zaijian (.) zai- (.) zaijian  
*goodbye (.) good- (.) goodbye*
- 61 NAN [yo no lo sabía  
*i didn't know that*
- 62 MIA zaijian ((approaching the computer))  
*goodbye*
- 63 NAI zaijian  
*goodbye*
- 64 NAN ahí tienes ahora ((pointing at MIA))  
*there you have now*
- 65 CLA zaijian  
*goodbye*
- 66 NAN [la pronunciación  
*the pronunciation*
- 67 NAI [zaijian  
*goodbye*



**Image 2.** Screenshot taken at line 50, Extract 2

The extract begins with Nanyamka and Naiara collaboratively trying to make the computer to say “ni hao” (“hello”) in Chinese, a greeting they already seem to be familiar with (see line 38). However, there is a problem with the language settings in Google Translate, and rather than “ni hao”, the computer provides them a translation in English (“hi”), which is read by Nanyamka in line 36 and repeated by Naiara in line 37. Nanyamka’s previous basic knowledge of Chinese makes her doubt what the translation tool is offering by proposing the correct answer (“ni hao”), although she directs her turn as a question to Miaomiao (line 38). Miaomiao responds to the greeting, in this case focusing on the content (in line 39), but this is not followed by the youth, since they are focusing on ensuring the correct translation. Naiara identifies and solves the problem with the translation settings in line 40, and Nanyamka pronounces the word she wants to add into the translation tool both in English (“hello”) and in Spanish (“hola”) in the following line. Again, Miaomiao focuses on the content, in line 42, and responds to the greeting, this time in Spanish, taking up one of the options offered by Nanyamka. Still focusing on the correct translation in Chinese, when the tool gives it to them, both Nanyamka and Naiara read the greeting (“ni hao”) in line 43 and 44. Miaomiao orients towards their focus and confirms the correctness of the greeting in Chinese (“yeah”) in line 45.

After a short pause, Naiara proposes to continue by translating “adiós” (“goodbye”) into Chinese. Sara then presses play (in line 48) to make the computer say the first greeting again (“ni hao”, line 49). Nanyamka multimodally

accompanies this greeting by waving her hand at Miaomiao (see Image 2). Nanyamka then makes a comment about the interactional dynamic that has been established, telling Emilee that “es la única forma que nos podemos comunicar” (“this is the only way we can communicate”), as she types something else into the translation tool. Once the new translation is given by the computer, Naiara tries to read it aloud (“zai ian”, line 52) and thus to act as the animator of the utterance she had previously suggested translating. This is not accepted by Nanyamka, who validates the computer as the animator by pressing play in line 53. The computer says the greeting in Chinese (“zaijian”) and Nanyamka looks at Miaomiao, to whom the greeting is directed (line 55). Immediately, Nanyamka turns her focus again to the form by presenting a metalinguistic reflection about the difference in the written and oral forms of the language (“madre mía la diferencia eh”, translated as “oh my goodness the difference eh”, line 55). Right after that, Julián focuses back on the content by questioning the fact that Nanyamka has said goodbye to Miaomiao – “le has dicho adiós?” (“you told her goodbye?”), line 56, and “qué mala gente Nanyamka” (“you are a bad person Nanyamka”), in line 59. In overlap, Naiara tries to pronounce the greeting several times (57 and 60), indicating her orientation now towards learning the Chinese word. Nanyamka shows a similar orientation towards learning in line 61, commenting that she did not know how to say “zaijian” before, “yo no lo sabía” (“I didn’t know that”). In line 62, Miaomiao aligns with this disposition for learning and offers the correct pronunciation of “zaijian”, which is immediately repeated by Naiara. Nanyamka indicates the Chinese language expertise of Miaomiao by telling Naiara that Miaomiao’s pronunciation is the correct one (line 64 and 66), and in doing so she claims linguistic expertise for herself. Both Claudia (in line 65) and Naiara (in line 67) orient towards the learning activity and ratify Miaomiao as an expert by repeating the oral form she has offered.

At the beginning of this second extract we can observe how the ratification of the tool as a valid participant continues to be negotiated, possibly due, in part, to a mistake in the language choice in the translation tool’s settings. Despite this mistake, we can see that Nanyamka’s previous basic knowledge of Chinese contributes to identifying and solving the problem, and thus to the progressivity of the activity. Once the problem is solved and the correct greeting is given, a dual focus remains throughout the whole extract 1) the message being communicated between the youth and the Chinese facilitator; and 2) the linguistic form of that message, by focusing on the correctness of the written and oral forms of the words in Chinese, as well as on learning these forms.

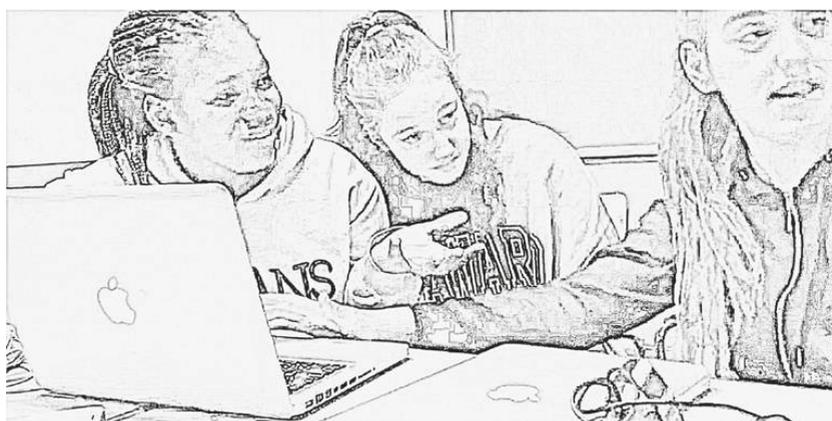
Moreover, in this second extract, the role of Nanyamka as main mediator between the youth, the translation tool, the Chinese language and the Chinese

facilitator begins to be established. In Extract 3, her mediating role is developed further.

### Extract 3

- 68 NAN ehm (..) qué le podemos escribir? ((putting four fingers together; looking at SAR))  
*ehm (..) what can we write to her?*
- 69 NAI [caca culo pedo pis ((leaning to computer))  
*shit ass fart pee*
- 70 NAN ((laughs))
- 71 SAR [((typing))
- 72 NAI [echas  
*do*
- 73 NAN de:: de ((laughs)) de  
*you:: you you*
- 74 NAI ((laughs)) de menos  
*miss*
- 75 SAR ((typing))
- 76 NAN en china es eh (.) (zao) ((draws z in the air with a finger, then fingers on forehead))  
*in china it is eh (.) (zao)*
- 77 NAI (chona) ((laughs))
- 78 NAN no ((laughs)) eh no sé:  
*no i don't know:*
- 79 SAR ((looking for button)) ui
- 80 NAN no eso en chino es así  
*no that in chinese is like this*
- 81 SAR ((presses play, NAN, NAI and SAR look to MIA, see Image 3))
- 82 COM ni xiangnian zhongguo  
*you miss china*
- 83 NAN NAI  
 SAR ((turn gaze to MIA))
- 84 MIA ah:: yes
- 85 NAN ((looks to computer)) me encanta esto  
*i love this*
- 86 SAR ((laughs))
- 87 JUL gracias eh  
*thank you*
- 88 NAN eh:: (..) [((typing))
- 89 NAI [me quieres?  
*do you love me?*

90 NAI NAN  
 SAR ((laugh at what is on the screen))  
 91 NAN ((presses play)) [((looks at MIA))  
 92 NAI SAR [look at MIA  
 93 COM wo xihuan ni de yifu  
*i like your clothes*  
 94 MIA oh: really? ((laughs))  
 95 NAN yes  
 96 MIA all of these sentences are correct



**Image 3.** Screenshot taken at line 81, Extract 3

Nanyamka wants to begin a new sequence to communicate with Miaomiao, but she asks for some ideas from her peers on what to write to be translated for her: “qué le podemos escribir” (“what can we write to her?”, line 68). Naiara responds with a childish joke which makes Nanyamka laugh, but Sara multimodally responds to her demand by typing a question for Miaomiao into the computer, thus becoming the principal and the author in the production format (line 71). Naiara and Nanyamka read little by little what Sara is writing for Miaomiao (“echas de menos China”, translated as “do you miss China”, lines 72–74). While Sara is still writing the sentence, Nanyamka draws again on her knowledge of Chinese by trying to give the translation of China in Chinese, in line 76: “en China es eh” (“in China it is eh”). She multimodally continues her word-search by drawing a

'z' in the air with her fingers, before pronouncing a first attempt at the word ("zao"). Naiara responds to Nanyamka's attempt jokingly with a made-up word ("chona"), which Nanyamka reacts to in the following line, in which she also voices her trouble recalling the word she is seeking. When the word appears translated on the screen – after Sara has finished typing her sentence in Spanish and pressed the button to translate to Chinese (in line 79) – Nanyamka confirms it in line 80: "no eso en chino es así" ("no that in Chinese is like this"). Sara then presses play and the computer voices the sentence.

Meanwhile, Nanyamka, Naiara and Sara turn their gaze to Miaomiao, indicating their request for a response, which is reinforced by the hand gesture deployed by Nanyamka (see Image 3). Miaomiao responds to Sara's question ("ah yes"), orienting towards the content (i.e. missing China) and thus the progressivity of the interaction. After Miaomiao's response, in line 85 Nanyamka produces a positive evaluation of using the computer translation tool to communicate with Miaomiao: "me encanta esto" ("I love this"). After some laughter and a comment from Julián that does not seem to be directly related to the flow of talk, Nanyamka starts typing a new sentence (line 88), that makes the youth laugh. In overlap, Naiara seems to suggest another possible question to be typed and translated – "me quieres?" ("do you love me?") – which is not taken up. In line 91, Nanyamka presses play and she, Naiara and Sara look at Miaomiao for a reaction to Nanyamka's translated comment. After 'hearing' the written text from Nanyamka, the computer reports the sentence for Miaomiao, who responds in line 94 ("oh really?"), focusing on the content and the progressivity of the interaction. In line 96, Miaomiao switches her focus to the form of the computer's utterances, by indicating to the youth that all the computer's translations in Chinese are correct.

In this extract although Sara begins as the principal and author in the interaction, the mediating role of Nanyamka continues to be relevant, since she puts forward her knowledge of Chinese – which she tries to check using Miaomiao's expertise – and confirms that the sentence proposed by the translation tool is correct. Moreover, after another successful question and response, Nanyamka presents a positive evaluation of the tool and proposes a new sentence, in this case as principal and author. Although at the end of the extract Miaomiao returns to the focus on the correctness of the sentences, a full sequence has been completely accomplished, through a computer-mediated interaction in which Nanyamka has been the principal and author, the computer the animator and reporter, and Miaomiao the ratified hearer and evaluator.

## 6. Discussion

In the data studied in this chapter, in order to talk with the Chinese facilitator, youth participants afford the Google Translate tool the role of interpreter to assist communication, based on its translation and TTS functions. In the interactional process, all the participants present, including the laptop computer, take on certain roles and responsibilities, which have been analysed in depth.

Generally speaking, there are two main parties to the interaction: one is Miaomio, the other is made up by some of the youth participants; mainly Nanyamka, Naiara and Sara. Emilee, Claudia and Julián also join in the conversation as bystanders, who also help to facilitate communication. Moreover, the laptop computer with access to Google Translate, a non-human participant handled by the youth, fulfilled the role of animator, speaking on behalf of the youth, as well as the role of reporter, ‘hearing’ the youths’ written text and then voicing the translated sentences. This one-way translation model suggests that the computer is included in the youth party to the interaction. The Google Translate tool translates the source language – usually Spanish – into the target language – Chinese – and speaks the young people’s words. The principal and author of the machine speech is the youth participant who formulates an idea and utterance in the source language and types it into the computer. Furthermore, following Merlino and Mondada (2014), by gazing at Miaomio during the machine translator’s turn, the student(s) present(s) themselves as authoring and being responsible for its talk. Miaomio herself takes on a combination of the three speaker roles (animator, author, principal) when she responds to the youths’ enquiries. The youth participants shift their gaze towards Miaomio not only to indicate their expectation of what will happen next in the interaction, but also to select her as next speaker (Goodwin, 1981).

Creatively, the youth participants collaboratively initiate a new communicative dynamic within the plurilingual encounter. Regarding language choice, the youth participants are also English learners who to some extent can understand English speech. Aware of this, Miaomio chooses to respond to the youths’ enquires in English directly. Consequently, Miaomio’s choice bypasses using the Google Translate tool to render her own utterance into Spanish for the youth participants, which might be expected if we compare to typical interpreter-mediated contexts. As a result, a cyclical, triangular communication pattern emerges: the youth input Spanish into the machine translator, after which the machine translator speaks Chinese for Miaomio, then Miaomio responds to the youth participants in English. Indeed, the languages within the conversation

switch from Spanish to Chinese to English, a process which leads to meaningful and dynamic communication.

In the analysis of the data, we note that Nanyamka leads a great deal of the dialogue and also acts as a linguistic mediator, in the sense that she facilitates cross-linguistic exchanges and interactional progressivity. Moreover, Nanyamka's mediation activities also facilitates interaction with her peers through contributing to progressivity and by establishing a positive atmosphere for communication among them. Her embodied language helps her become a competent mediator and communicator.

Moreover, the analysis suggests that this type of plurilingual and multimodal exchange connects with the 21<sup>st</sup> century educational competences presented in the introduction to this chapter: plurilingual and intercultural competence, mediation competence and digital competence. As has been observed in the interactions, the youth participants exploit their skills (linguistic repertoire, cultural knowledge, curiosity and digital skills) to facilitate communication. As we have observed, cross-linguistic mediation unavoidably involves social and cultural competence as well as plurilingual competence (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 106). In addition, computer translation technology is integrated by young people in their plurilingual and pluricultural social encounter and for learning. The youth participants in the interaction collaboratively and actively draw on the digital resource at hand to solve communicative problems, which reflects on their digital awareness and skills. All in all, the analysis of these data suggests that plurilingual, digitally-enhanced interactions can provide an opportunity for developing 21<sup>st</sup> century competences.

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Emilee Moore / Mandy Deal / Almudena Herrera

## Making *Colin the poet* real English language learning as embodied action, aesthetics and emotion

**Abstract** This chapter analyses videorecorded interactions in English theatre sessions with a group of secondary school students. It shows how seemingly inauthentic language input is transformed into a real, embodied, aesthetic and emotional learning experience by the youth. In the data studied, learners work with a commercially published drama script over several weeks, reading it aloud, repeating it, memorising it, correcting themselves and being corrected, paying attention to their voices, to their bodies, to the physical space and to material props. They play roles, play with words and their voices, with their bodies and movement, and with objects encountered. The chapter considers notions of authenticity, play, action, aesthetics and emotion in second language education to trace how the young people show their understanding that authentic language and language learning are done while constructing real life.

**Keywords:** authenticity, play, theatre, embodied action, aesthetics, emotion, youth

### 1. Introduction

The following dialogue is taken from the English teaching resource *Get on stage*:

Scene: Mr and Mrs Atkins are having breakfast. Enter Colin.

- Mr Atkins:** Good morning, Colin.  
**Colin:** Good morning, Dad.  
Good morning, Mum –  
It's Colin here,  
Your poet son.  
**Mr Atkins:** Oh Colin! (*rolling his eyes in desperation*) Tea?  
**Colin:** One, two, three,  
Tea for me.  
**Mrs Atkins:** Stop it Colin! Here's your tea.

(Puchta et al., 2012, p. 50)

To most teachers and researchers of English as a foreign language, scripted texts such as this might be swiftly identified as neither 'real' nor 'natural' language. As Gilmore (2007) writes, "it has long been recognised that the language presented

to students in textbooks is a poor representation of the real thing” (p. 98). Gilmore presents a review of the literature on authenticity in foreign language learning, beginning with a presentation of the diverse definitions of what makes language ‘authentic’. He concludes that these definitions – the most appropriate of which, for him, would be “a stretch of real language, produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some sort” (Morrow, 1977, p. 13, cited in Gilmore, 2007, p. 98) – are too broad to be useful. Rather, he argues, we should focus on the desired outcome of foreign language teaching, being learners’ communicative competence in the target language, and use classroom materials that best promote this end. Gilmore reviews research from different traditions to support the argument that the language provided in many current commercial teaching resources is inadequate for promoting communicative competence and less motivating for students, among other shortfalls.

While we do not disagree with Gilmore’s (2007) claims about the inadequacy of certain published materials for teaching and learning English, in this chapter we take a view of authenticity that is more in line with Breen’s (1985) approach. For Breen, there are four types of authenticity that need to be taken into account: 1) of texts used as language input; 2) of learners’ own interpretations of texts; 3) of tasks for language learning; 4) of the social situation of the classroom. Only the first of these is contemplated in the definition supported by Gilmore, following Morrow; Breen’s four types of authenticity are cited in Gilmore’s review, but all except the first are critically disregarded as, he claims, “once we start including subjective notions such as learner authentication, any discourse can be called authentic and the term becomes meaningless” (Gilmore, 2007, p. 98). However, in this chapter, we are primarily concerned with the other three types of authenticity proposed by Breen. We concur with Breen (1985) when he claims that:

It is reasonable to argue that the teaching-learning process should be authentic to its particular objectives and content—the language to be learned. However, the learners’ own contributions, the activity of language learning, and the actual classroom situation are also constituent elements within this process. The language lesson is an event wherein all four elements—content, learner, learning, and classroom—each provide their own relative criteria concerning what might be authentic. Within the lesson, a balance needs to be maintained—or a tension resolved—between different and sometimes contradictory criteria for authenticity. (p. 61)

In the data studied in this contribution, a group of teenage learners of English as a foreign language are engaging with the script of a play from the *Get on stage* resource book entitled *Colin the poet* (Puchta et al., 2012), from which the scene reproduced in the introduction to the chapter was extracted. They do so as part

of an extracurricular activity organised by their English teacher, who selected the scripts to work with. The learners work with the text over several weeks, reading the script aloud, repeating it, memorising it, correcting themselves and being corrected by adults and peers, paying attention to their voices, to their bodies, to the physical space and to material props. They move from a (written) drama text to a (performed) stage text (Göthberg et al., 2018; Moore & Bradley, 2020). Observing the teenagers in this process, the idea of play – in the sense of an activity done for fun – comes to mind. The young people play different roles, play with words and their voices, with their bodies and movement, and with objects encountered and given new meanings as props. While the text they are using is not ‘real’, in the sense of authenticity advocated by Gilmore and Morrow, the teenagers indeed seem to make it so.

Cook (1997) also contributed to the debate about authenticity in language teaching. We cannot present all of his arguments here; however we are inspired by his focus on play in language teaching and learning and what he sees as the authenticity of such play. Cook explains that while authentic language and tasks are often considered to be focused on meaning, much play is actually rule-governed; players know the rules, discuss them, and pull each other up when rules are broken. Furthermore, while worlds of play are often intrinsically not ‘real’ worlds, play does occur naturally and authentically; it is a major feature of human life. This is also so for language play; we play with sounds, grammatical structures, create words, and so on. Such language play has no ‘real’ practical outcomes; rather, it is “language for enjoyment, for the self, for its own sake” (Cook, 1997, p. 230). Understanding the role of play in human life and language use, according to Cook, has important implications for our understandings of authenticity in language teaching and learning: “What is needed [...] is a recognition of the complexity of language learning: that it is sometimes play and sometimes for real, sometimes form-focused and sometimes meaning-focused, sometimes fiction and sometimes fact” (Cook, 1997, p. 231).

Setting out from these considerations of authenticity, we take a data-driven approach to understanding the activities performed and the resources deployed by learners as they interact with the drama text, *Colin the poet*, their own and others’ bodies, space, material artefacts and emotions. We also explore the potential of these interactions for an expanded understanding of what and how the young people learn in terms of language. In the following section of the chapter, we present an approach to learning and cognition that connects with embodied action, aesthetics and emotion. We then present the methodological approach followed both in the collection and in the analysis of the data: while collaborative ethnographic and action-research principles inspired the fieldwork, the analysis

of video recorded interactions adheres to the principles of conversation analysis. The data presented and analysed in the next section were extracted from video recordings made over several sessions as a group of teenagers engaged with the script of *Colin the poet*. In the concluding section of the chapter, we summarise our arguments supporting the authenticity of the language learning process studied.

## 2. Language learning, embodied action, aesthetics and emotion

The approach to learning followed in this chapter is grounded, firstly, in Hutchins' (1995) notion of cognition in the wild (see also Pratginestós & Masats, this volume). Hutchins was a cognitive scientist who argued for anthropological methods for conceptualising and observing how people think. He was also an avid seaman, and his pioneering research was conducted on the navigation bridge of a navy ship. He observed how cognition could only be explained as a phenomenon that was socially distributed across the team of crew members, within an ecology of activities and conceptual and material resources, rather than existing inside individual heads (see also Moore & Hawkins, this volume). According to Hutchins (1995), cognition in the wild:

refers to human cognition in its natural habitat – that is, to naturally occurring culturally constituted human activity. [...] I have in mind the distinction between the laboratory, where cognition is studied in captivity, and the everyday world, where human cognition adapts to its natural surroundings. I hope to evoke with this metaphor a sense of an ecology of thinking in which human cognition interacts with an environment rich in organizing resources. (pp. xiii – xiv)

Also from an anthropological orientation, the work by Goodwin is essential to our research for understanding “cognition as a public, social process embedded within an historically shaped material world” (2000, p. 1491). Over numerous studies Goodwin shows how action is built through the mobilisation of diverse semiotic resources, including but extending beyond language, as participants mutually arrange their bodies around aspects of their environment, and how objects in the environment create a locus for the organisation of attention. Goodwin (2000) writes that:

a primordial site for the analysis of human language, cognition, and action consists of a situation in which multiple participants are attempting to carry out courses of action in concert with each other through talk while attending to both the larger activities that their current actions are embedded within, and relevant phenomena in their surround. (p. 1489).

By situating cognition in bodies in space and social interaction, Hutchins' and Goodwin's contributions are harmonious with the view of cognition in conversation analysis (CA), as well as in sociocultural theories of learning, and in sociointeractionist approaches to language learning in particular. CA considers all cognitive properties of people to be rooted within, and thereby accessible from, their situated interaction (Coulter, 1991). CA thus redefines phenomena – such as memory, perception and learning – that have often been treated as individualistic in different approaches to cognition, as activities that are intrinsically social, occasioned and mobilised by people for practical purposes (Kasper, 2008). The present study draws on this CA perspective on cognition, as well as drawing on some of its methodological tools in the analysis of data (see Section 3).

Sociointeractionist researchers of language learning conceive of language use and language learning as two sides of the same coin: naturally occurring social interaction is the genesis of cognitive processes, including second language learning, and is the natural site for their study (Mondada & Pekarek-Doehler, 2004; Pekarek-Doehler, 2013). Furthermore, they propose that if higher thinking processes such as learning are understood as being inextricable from participation in social activity, a CA approach has the capacity to effectively capture emerging phenomena that constitute social interaction and thus cognition.

So far we have connected cognition and learning to bodies in coordinated action and in space. Returning to our discussion on play and drawing on Piazzoli's (2018) work on action and artistry in second language education, we also consider learning – and language learning in particular – to be an aesthetic and emotional experience. The emotional dimensions of language learning have been well studied in sociocultural theory (e.g. Kramsch, 2009). Developing this further, Piazzoli considers teaching and learning as art forms, the work of which may be observed in the interaction (e.g. improvisation) between teachers and learners (or coartists), between learners, and between teachers, learners and educational resources as they are crafted into lessons. The artistic processes of teaching and learning “involve not only cognition, but also affect, imagery, sensation, different forms of memory, emotion and embodiment” (Piazzoli, 2019, p. 8). In making her arguments in favour of an aesthetic and emotional approach to second language education, Piazzoli draws on Winston (2010), who develops beauty as an educational concept, examining the cognitive, affective and moral consequences of the experience of beauty, for example in the use of drama in second language teaching. Piazzoli also cites neuroscientist Immordino-Yang (2016), who claims:

Understanding the role of emotions in learning goes far beyond recognizing the emotion a student is having about a situation in order to design learning environments that strategically manipulate students' reactions. [...] Instead, understanding emotions is also (and perhaps even more critically) about the *meaning* that students are making – that is, the ways in which students and teachers are *experiencing* or feeling their emotional regions and how their feelings steer thoughts and behaviour, consciously or not. Emotions are not add-ons that are distinct from cognitive skills. Instead emotions, such as interest, anxiety, frustration, excitement, or a sense of awe in beholding beauty, become a dimension of the skill itself. (p. 21, cited in Piazzoli, 2018, p. 3)

Retaining these different perspectives on language learning as situated in embodied action, and intimately tied to aesthetics and emotions, we now turn to the methodology employed in collecting and analysing the data studied in this chapter.

### 3. Methodology

The video data analysed in this chapter were recorded over four weeks in a regular class slot used for curricular reinforcement at one of the secondary schools involved in the IEP! project (see Moore, this volume). The activity itself lasted a whole term, as did the ethnographic observations. The teacher in charge of the slot (Almudena Herrera, one of the authors of this chapter) decided to use the time to set up a nonformal activity to help students improve their English through theatre. At the beginning of the term, the students were assigned to groups and were provided with different scripts from the *Get on stage* (Puchta et al., 2012) resource book. Over several weeks the students read, memorised and rehearsed their scripts, working on their reading comprehension, pronunciation and performance skills. They did so in a large, multifunctional room at the school, equipped with a stage (with curtains and lighting), reading booths and moveable chairs. Some groups were more committed to the process than others, with several choosing not to continue with the activity, and others being actively engaged, including one group of girls who eventually performed their play on stage at the local theatre as part of a community event. This is the group whose process is examined in this chapter. This group most often occupied the raised stage area of the room during the sessions and made use of its material affordances, including some props found in the wings.

Similar to the different studies making up the IEP! project, the data were collected following a collaborative ethnographic (Lassiter, 2005) and action-research

process, with two of the authors – Almudena Herrera and Emilee Moore – taking on different but complementary roles (Nussbaum, 2017). The sessions were designed and led by Almudena, while Emilee participated in them as researcher and teaching assistant. As Nussbaum explains, and we explored in our collaborative work:

Research in schools [...] entails a long journey of mutual recognition and trust between the researchers and the teaching staff, and a negotiation of give-and-take. In our experience, the most effective reward for both parties is engaging in a mutually satisfying project in which both the researchers and the teachers occupy complementary spaces – rather than asymmetrical ones – to collaboratively build educational knowledge. For external research teams working in a school, this option represents an excellent opportunity to acquire educational experience, to compare theory and practice, and as a source of inspiration for future investigations. For teachers, it offers a chance to share their professional concerns with colleagues who can help them to reflect upon them, as well as the reward of being a collaborative participant in building didactic knowledge and disseminating it jointly. (p. 47)

Both adults guided the students through the dramatic process, reading and rehearsing with them, correcting their pronunciation, and so on, while also allowing the students to take on most of the work as ‘directors’ of the play themselves. Both adults also filmed the students at times using a handheld video camera. Different students also took on the responsibility of filming their classmates, while others were spectators who were more or less taken into account by the group rehearsing on stage. Thus, in the sessions studied there was always an ‘audience’ physically present, besides the imagined audience of a potential final performance.

In terms of the analysis, the process followed the principles of conversation analysis and incorporated Mandy Deal, the third author of this chapter. The video data were analysed at a situated level – tracing phenomena within each recording – as well as longitudinally – tracing phenomena across recordings – to study how the young people collaboratively construct actions and activities, including language learning. We take an emic approach, rather than an etic one; in other words, we consider the phenomena that emerge in the data and consider the meaning of different interactional moves from the perspective of the young people according to their behaviours, rather than interpreting the data based on a priori categorisations about what interaction and phenomena such as learning should look like. Throughout this process of unmotivated looking (Sacks, 1984) our ethnographic knowledge about the learners and the context was available to us. However, following conversation analysis principles, as researchers we

also needed to be in a position to distance ourselves from the data and not seek to uncover any deeper understanding of events than what was made relevant by the participants themselves (ten Have, 2002). This stance of “ethnomethodological indifference” (Garfinkel & Sacks, 1970, p. 345) towards the data studied has been consciously sought.

#### 4. Analysis

The analysis presented in this section is framed around two main themes: 1) how a group of students make their communication real or authentic as they work with the script of *Colin the poet*; 2) evidence of their language learning. In terms of the first, we present a microanalysis of two short extracts which indicate how the students construct authentic language in their character roles, out of their character roles, and with spectators present. As for the second analytical focus, we present a more panoramic view of some of the evidence of the young people’s learning identified across the corpus.

As we have mentioned already, although two adults – the English teacher and the researcher – were present in the different sessions, the students were largely left to self-direct as they worked from a static, drama text to a stage text. In section 4.1 of the analysis, we firstly examine their interaction in their character roles: Mrs Atkins, Mr Atkins, Colin (their son and the protagonist), Fred (Colin’s elder brother), Kate (Colin’s elder sister) and the Postie, and follow this with an analysis of their out-of-role communication. The six male and female characters were played by five actresses, sometimes fewer if a group member failed to attend, such as in Extract 1. In the extracts the students are referred to by the characters’ names, whether or not they are acting in-role.

##### 4.1. Making *Colin the poet* real: in-role authenticity

In making their in-role communication authentic, the students employed a multimodal interactional ensemble. For example, if playing more than one character, the students would change the position of their bodies on stage and use different vocal resources to indicate these different roles. They also used gaze at the other characters with whom they were interacting (i.e. rather than at the script), prosodic resources (e.g. intonation – pitch, stress, rhythm – for marking emphasis, for expressing anger or annoyance, excitement, begging) and symbolic, embodied actions (e.g. pretending to clean, eat, drink, make and serve food

and tea, opening doors). These embodied actions were usually accompanied by physical objects found in the room, which were often symbolically repurposed as props (e.g. the stage curtain became the door, some cut off plastic bottle ends became teacups, some broken pieces of styrofoam became plates). Authenticity was also given to the stage text by spontaneously adding spoken lines and actions that were not part of the original script.

Many of these features of the students' in-role interaction may be observed in Extract 1, which was recorded in week two of the four weeks that were filmed of the process. As we saw in the introduction to this chapter, the opening scene of *Colin the poet* includes Mr Atkins and Mrs Atkins having breakfast, as Colin enters. Several lines later, Fred also enters the scene and joins his parents and brother at the table, after which the following exchange takes place in the script, which the students rehearse in Extract 1:

- Mrs Atkins:** Would you like some toast with your tea?  
**Fred:** Yes, please.  
**Colin:** D'you want your toast  
 As white as a ghost?  
**Fred:** Be quiet, Colin! I want brown crispy toast, please.

(Puchta et al., 2012, pp. 50–51)

### Extract 1

Characters from left to right: Mrs Atkins (MRS); Fred (FRE), Colin (COL), Mr Atkins (MRA)

01 **MRS** would you like  
 02 **some toast (.)**  
 03 **with your tea?**

MRS reads the script on her mobile phone, all other characters also look down at the script saved to their phones.



04 **FRE** yes please.

MRS and FRE make eye contact.  
 FRE slaps hand on the table.

05 (4)



MRA performs the action of drinking tea, using a cut-off plastic bottle end as a teacup, making eye contact with MRS.

06 MRA hm delicious.

MRA looks at COL, anticipating next line.

07 (3)



MRS and MRA make eye contact, MRS also performs the action of drinking tea, also using a cut-off plastic bottle end as a teacup.

08 MRS [((slurps, coughs))

09 COL [do you want your  
10 toast as a white as  
11 a ghost?

12 MRA ((coughs))

MRS and MRA sustain eye contact, COL reads from phone while unscrewing lid from small plastic bottle of water. COL performs drinking tea using plastic bottle, MRA coughs, sustaining eye contact with FRE.

In lines 1–2, the student performing Mrs Atkins reads her lines, looking down at her mobile phone. The other characters also look down at their phones as they follow the script. In line 3, as Mrs Atkins completes the question she is asking Fred, she and Fred look up and make eye contact. Fred then says his line without consulting the script and adds an embodied action that was not included in the drama text, slapping his hand on the table enthusiastically (line 4).

Several seconds of silence follow (line 5), during which Mr Atkins acts out drinking tea from a cut-off plastic bottle end, making eye contact with Mrs Atkins as he does so. He then ad libs a line that was not included in the script, claiming the tea is “delicious!” (line 6). As he does so, he looks at Colin, whose line the characters are anticipating as they follow the script. The silence continues (line 7), and Mrs Atkins replicates Mr Atkins’ drinking action, using a similar cut-off plastic bottle end. She sustains eye contact with Mr Atkins as she drinks, showing playful complicity with him, then improvises a slurping noise and a cough that were not part of the drama text.

The latter happen in overlap with Colin’s scripted lines (9–11). As Colin reads his lines, he unscrews the lid off a small plastic water bottle, which he then drinks from, emulating the action of drinking tea performed by the other characters. Colin sustains eye contact with Fred, who is the next speaker in the script, as he drinks. Meanwhile, Mr Atkins improvises a cough in line 12, responding to the cough performed by Mrs Atkins in line 8.

Thus, with the use of props and the improvisation of lines and actions that were not part of the script, the students begin to transform the prescribed drama text into a stage text they own and make real as characters of the play. What stands out in this extract is the reciprocal effect of the students’ improvised lines and actions, with a symbolic, embodied action initiated by Mr Atkins (i.e. drinking tea) being taken up by Mrs Atkins and Colin, and then elaborated by Mrs Atkins who adds a slurp and a cough, the latter being then incorporated by Mr Atkins into his own performative repertoire. It is also interesting that while the students do read most of their lines from their phones, they also make eye contact at significant interactional moments, such as to address their turns at the next speaker (i.e. lines 3 and 12), thereby displaying orientation to making their in-role communication authentic.

#### **4.2. Making *Colin the poet* real: Out-of-role authenticity**

The students also bring authenticity to the text when stepping out of their character roles, to comment on aspects of the rehearsal and correct each other’s lines as ‘directors’ of the play, or to seek assistance from others. We see such real out-of-role communication in Extract 2, from the fourth week of the data collection. In this case there is a fifth character present, Kate, and Mr and Mrs Atkins have

switched place at the table. The students have also incorporated new props found in the room into the scene, being a mop, a washcloth and some cleaning liquid. They are being filmed by another student, María, and Emilee, the researcher, is looking on. The students are practicing the following lines from the text:

**Kate:** Stop bugging me, Colin!  
**Mr Atkins:** Colin, *please!* we want peace and quiet!

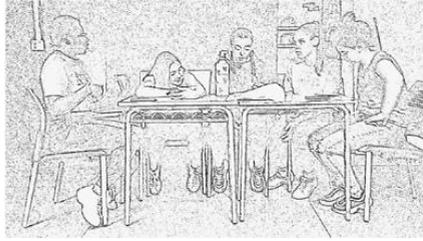
(Puchta et al., 2012, p. 51)

## Extract 2

Characters from left to right: Mr Atkins (MRA); Fred (FRE), Colin (COL), Kate (KAT), Mrs Atkins (MRS). María (MAR) – a student filming the rehearsal – and Emilee (EMI) – the researcher – also take part in the interaction.

01 **MAR** °pst°  
 02 **KAT** stop bugging me MRA, FRE and COL look towards MAR (who is  
 03 **colin** filming), KAT nudges COL with elbow.  
 04 **MAR** ( )  
 05 **FRE** ((to MAR)) qué?  
*what?*  
 06 **MRA** estoy aquí MRA fiddles with a wash cloth.  
 07 **(limpiando) vale?**  
*i am here*  
*(cleaning) ok?*  
 08 (5)  
 09 **FRE** ((to EMI)) cómo  
 10 **se dice que**  
 11 **tengo sueño**  
 12 **((laughs))?**  
*how do you say*  
*i'm tired?*  
 13 **EMI** i'm tired.  
 14 **FRE** ((to EMI)) qué?  
*what?*  
 15 **EMI** i'm tired.

16 FRE [i'm tired.



FRE puts head down on table, exaggerated, performing tiredness.

17 MRA [ah we're

18 tired.

19 COL no. colin

20 please we want

21 peace and quiet

22 MRA pues eso.

*well that.*

In line 1, María tries to get the performers' attention by whispering at them loud enough to be heard on stage: "pst". Mr Atkins, Fred and Colin look at her, while Kate continues with her line (lines 2–3), telling Colin to "stop bugging" her, adding a nudge, which was not scripted. Maria says something to the group that is neither understandable in the recording nor to the students on stage, as Fred asks her "qué?" ("what?") in line 5. Mr Atkins makes an out-of-role metacomment about his embodied actions, telling his peers that he is cleaning, as he fiddles with the washcloth, which he folds and unfolds.

After a long silence (line 8), Fred looks to Emilee and asks her "cómo se dice que tengo sueño?" ("how do you say I'm tired?"), laughing as he does so (lines 9–12). Emilee provides the English translation for him (line 13), which Fred asks her to repeat. After Emilee repeats the sentence in line 15, Fred says it too as he puts his head down on the table in an exaggerated, performative manner. Thus, both student-actor Fred and in-character Fred seem to express their tiredness.

Fred's actions happen in overlap with Mr Atkins', who adapts Emilee's input in the first person singular ("I'm tired") to the first person plural form ("we are tired", lines 17–18). He does so following an "ah" change of state token, suggesting that he had been searching for his line and takes Fred's and Emilee's turns as appropriate prompts (lines 17–18). Colin, who has been following the script on his phone, corrects Mr Atkins in the following lines (19–21), reading from the text: "Colin please we want peace and quiet". Interestingly, Mr Atkins'

“we’re tired” could be considered a good approximation of the scripted “we want peace and quiet”, suggesting that he understood the meaning that his line was meant to transmit, although he forgot the exact words. Mr Atkins accepts Colin’s correction in line 22, “pues eso” (“well that”) although he does not repeat it, possibly satisfied that his version was adequate enough in expressing the scripted meaning.

In this second extract, we thus see how one of the characters, Fred, takes advantage of a pause in the flow of the rehearsal, caused both by Maria’s interruption and Mr Atkins’ forgetting his lines, to step out of his role and seek Emilee’s assistance expressing his in-character or out-of-character feelings in English. He thereby creates an authentic language learning moment, which is effective as not only he, but also Mr Atkins, show uptake of the translation provided by the researcher (De Pietro et al., 1989). It is also interesting how the lines between out-of-role and in-role interactions are blurred in the extract, as non-scripted language input from an off-script moment is incorporated into the performance. Finally, it is important to highlight the directorship role taken on by the students, in this case by making metacomments about the embodied actions being performed (Mr Atkins) or by correcting their peers’ lines (Colin). The latter is also interesting as it reveals different understandings of what bringing the text to stage means: Mr Atkins performs a free adaptation while Colin focuses on scripted accuracy. All of these features, we argue, bring the static, written text to life as an authentic communicative experience.

### **4.3. Evidence of learning**

In this section of the analysis, we comment on some of the changes in the students’ performance observed over the four weeks of videorecorded sessions and their implications for the students’ language learning. Firstly, over time, the students became less dependent on reading the script and their gazes towards their cointeractants grew longer. In earlier rehearsals (e.g. Extract 1), they tended to read the script and looked at the next speaker at the end of their turns. In the latter rehearsals (e.g. Extract 2), there are attempts to depend less on the script and to sustain eye contact longer. Gazing at interlocutors is in competition with reading the script, leading to more interruptions due to forgetting lines, such as in Extract 2. However, the students’ increasing use of eye contact is an indication of their growing understanding of the text and of the rules of real-life communication.

We also see changes in the use of props (e.g. from teacups in Extract 1 to cleaning products in Extract 2), in the distribution of the space (e.g. in Mr

and Mrs Atkins' switching places in Extracts 1 and 2) and in the characters' embodied actions across the videorecordings. These features reflect the students' interpretation of the task as play – they find objects around the room, give them a symbolic use and incorporate them into the set design and their embodied dispositions – as well as their focus on the task as an aesthetic experience. This play, following Cook (1997), is also rule-governed, with the students taking on directorship roles; for example to correct wrong lines (Extract 2). Furthermore, the students' embodied actions appear to be increasingly coordinated with the talk, with others and with props as the rehearsals progress.

Later rehearsals also showed increasing emotional reactions, such as in Fred's embodied performance of tiredness in Extract 2. Emotions such as annoyance at Colin's rhyming speech, which are expressed in the characters' spoken lines, also become increasingly expressed in the actors' embodied actions (e.g in Kate's nudging Colin in Extract 2).

Finally, there is concrete evidence of language learning, in terms of new language picked up (e.g. "I'm tired" and "we're tired" in Extract 2) and particularly in terms of correcting the pronunciation of certain words. In earlier recordings, for example, "tea" is pronounced /tea/. Following corrections from the teacher, researcher and peers, it is pronounced /ti/ in later recordings. Similarly, the pronunciation of "quiet" transitions from /kiət/ to /kwaɪət/ as an outcome of assistance from others. We consider these instances as potential acquisition sequences (De Pietro et al., 1989), in an approach to language learning as situated in social interaction (Firth & Wagner, 2007; Mori, 2007).

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

We began this chapter by considering the meaning of authenticity in foreign language learning, especially in reference to learning materials published in textbooks, as in the case of the *Colin the poet* play. We argued that viewing authenticity simply in terms of real language conveying real messages produced by real speakers or writers for real audiences (Morrow, 1977, p. 13, cited in Gilmore, 2007, p. 98) was inadequate, and instead adopted Breen's four types of authenticity – of language input texts, of learners' interpretations of texts, of language learning tasks, and of classroom interactions – as offering a more complex representation of how texts – in our case a drama text – could be made real by learners. Following Cook (1997), we also connected authenticity to play. Finally, we introduced different perspectives on learning as embodied action, aesthetics and emotion, and in particular

were influenced by Piazzoli's (2019) work on drama – as well as art and artistry more generally – in language teaching and learning. Through the analysis of videorecorded interactions in English theatre sessions with a group of secondary school students, we showed how seemingly inauthentic language input was transformed into a real, embodied, aesthetic and emotional learning experience by the youth.

The use of props, the stage space, embodied actions and the students' emotions are essential in this transformation. Indeed, the authenticity of the language learning experience studied cannot be considered in isolation from the multimodal ensemble of resources deployed by the learners. For example, a student in Extract 2 exploits the possibilities of the classroom context as an authentic interactional space, calling on the researcher for language input to express a real feeling. The students also show how they orient to the language learning task as one meant for their enjoyment, for play – this is not a task to be rushed through, or to be done solely for a hypothetical real audience in the future, but rather one meant for the students' enjoyment in the present. Furthermore, we have shown how the students' use of multimodal resources both gives meaning to the script (i.e. scaffolds the students' understanding of it) and allows them to construct and display new meanings. That is, the use of props, the space and embodied actions both mediate understanding for the characters and for potential spectators. In short, through their talk and actions, the young people show their understanding that language and language learning are inextricably done while constructing real life.

Finally, we offer some reflections on the collaborative research process that we have presented. We began this chapter with the observation that the *Colin the poet* drama script chosen by the teacher (Almudena Herrera) might be rapidly identified by language education professionals and researchers as being 'inauthentic' or including 'nonnatural' language, and thus disregarded as a valuable teaching and learning resource. Being entirely honest, this was also the first impression of the researcher (Emilee Moore) who attended the drama sessions. What the process studied in this chapter suggests, however, is that the teacher's intuition that this fabricated drama script would support meaningful learning for her students was indeed verified by the empirical evidence gathered. Collaborative research, as we have understood it in the IEP! project, involves teachers, researchers and other members of educational communities taking on complementary roles, in order to jointly build knowledge. Such complementarity entails being critical of epistemological hierarchies, which in more traditional approaches would place university-researchers as the 'knowers' and others as 'learners'. This hierarchy of 'knowing' was flattened in the study presented herein, which in turn allowed for

the disruption of preconceived ideas and the generation of new understandings of language learning.

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Emilee Moore / Andy Morodo

## Final reflections

**Abstract** This concluding chapter offers some final reflections regarding the four objectives of the research project ‘Inclusive epistemologies and practices of out-of-school English learning (IEP!)’<sup>1</sup>, funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation, which ran from January 2019 until June 2021. These aims were: 1) to collaboratively research teenagers’ existing practices of using and learning English out of school time; 2) to implement new, inclusive, nonformal English language educational initiatives; 3) to evaluate the impact of the nonformal English language educational initiatives implemented; 4) to support the sustainability and transferability of the initiatives. Both the main outcomes and some enduring challenges are presented.

**Keywords:** English as a Foreign Language, out-of-school, youth, inclusion

This different chapters that make up this volume report on diverse aspects of the research project ‘Inclusive epistemologies and practices of out-of-school English learning (IEP!)’, funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation, which ran from January 2019 until June 2021. The aims of the project were:

- 1) To collaboratively research teenagers’ existing practices of using and learning English out of school time;
- 2) To implement new, inclusive, nonformal English language educational initiatives;
- 3) To evaluate the impact of the nonformal English language educational initiatives implemented;
- 4) To support the sustainability and transferability of the initiatives.

While each of the contributions to the volume has presented specific findings, in this brief concluding chapter we offer some final reflections in relation to these four project objectives, with a focus on the main outcomes and the enduring challenges faced.

In terms of the first objective, as was discussed in Moore (this volume), IEP! emerged from an intersectoral alliance involving our university’s outreach office (Fundació Autònoma Solidària), English teachers and head teachers from

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1 Reference number: PRPPGC2018-099071-A-I00.

the two secondary schools in the town at the centre of our work, members of the local council, the Catalan Education Department and university researchers/teacher educators. Collaborative and creative approaches to educational research and practice were fundamental to the project's epistemology, in endeavouring towards inclusion not only in terms of the problem tackled – youths' (non)equitable opportunities for learning of English – but also in terms of 'knowing' and building new knowledge. The chapters show how different members of the educational community are legitimised as 'knowers', each offering different yet complementary perspectives on the phenomena under study.

The chapters offer fascinating insights into the multimodal communicative lives of young people in metropolitan Catalonia as we near the end of the first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Zhang and Llompart (this volume), reveal how youth mobilise their emergent linguistic repertoires, the digital resource of Google Translate, as well as cultural discourses which circulate through global social networks of communication and information, in managing a plurilingual and intercultural encounter. Corona et al. (this volume) discuss young people's socialisation into English through their participation in imagined communities of YouTubers and Instagrammers, showing the traces of this membership in the practices and conventions displayed by the youth in their video productions. Pratinestós and Masats (this volume) examine how English learners agentively use Instagram chats to communicate and socialise translocally, offering an intriguing glance at the semiotic complexity of youths' interactions in which meaning is mediated by text, photographs, gifs, videos, audio clips, emoji, and other multimodal resources.

In terms of the second aim to implement new, inclusive, nonformal English language education initiatives, the different chapters describe our work in setting up a Global StoryBridges<sup>2</sup> site at the local youth centre (see Moore & Hawkins, this volume; Zhang & Llompart, this volume) and an English drama activity at one of the schools (see Moore, Deal et al., this volume). Pratinestós and Masats (this volume) also describe the connection between the informal translocal exchanges employing social media by Catalan and Greek youth and a project the authors helped set up in the students' school English classes. In the chapters by Moore (this volume) and Corona et al. (this volume), our aim of pursuing youth-led participatory action-research (YPAR) to collaboratively build new opportunities for the young people's learning of English is also discussed, as well as the difficulties experienced in accomplishing this aspect of the project.

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2 See: <http://www.globalstorybridges.com/>

Our research confirms the potential of the collaborative and creative action and activist approaches followed in IEP! for promoting equitable access to non-formal education and for research, while YPAR remains an enduring challenge for future studies in this field.

As for the third objective, as well as offering an expanded understanding of how young people communicate, the chapters have offered expansive understandings of how language learning is enacted by youth in informal and nonformal contexts. Moore and Hawkins (this volume) offer an ecological perspective to account for the complexity of how young people's histories, linguistic repertoires, roles and identities, embodied modes beyond spoken language, material artefacts, and so on, emerge and are mobilised in interaction, as well as for considering the types of learning opportunities that are afforded by the emergent ecosystem. Moore, Deal et al. (this volume) place embodied action, aesthetics and emotion at the centre of their understanding of learning and show how seemingly inauthentic language input is transformed into a meaningful learning experience by youth. Pratginestós and Masats (this volume) offer an approach to studying young people's learning in the digital wild that captures the essence of their multimodal communication in social media. In short, IEP! has revealed that both communication and learning out of school – and arguably in school as well – are multimodal, aesthetic and emotional experiences for young people, which require expansive methodological and theoretical toolkits to be fully appreciated, including those proposed by the contributors to this volume.

The fourth and final objective of the project was to support the sustainability and transferability of the initiatives implemented for encouraging youths' learning of English. This raises questions as to whether the sustainability of our educational action and activism should be measured in terms of the longevity of the activities implemented, or the longevity of the relationships and collaborations established. If we were to opt for the first, we would need to conclude that this objective was not met in the IEP! project. Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic was declared approximately 14 months into this 30-month project, leading our country and much of the world into a hard lockdown and remote schooling, and to the suspension of the activities we had implemented thus far. On the other hand, if we consider the lasting relationships and collaborations established with different members of the educational community, we see great potential for the sustainability and transferability of our work in future joint projects.

We conclude this chapter and the volume with a reflection on the health, social and economic crises that we are currently facing. Moore, Vallejo et al. (this volume) predict the exacerbation of existing educational inequalities, including

those affecting access to extracurricular learning opportunities, as we recover from the global pandemic. Thus, collaborative and creative action and activist research, supporting inclusive practices of out-of-school (English) learning are as needed – or perhaps more needed – now as they were at the time we embarked on this project. In Moore (this volume), we argued that in order to deal with present-day issues, new *ways of knowing* are at stake, and we believe that IEP! has offered a model for this important epistemological challenge.

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# Appendix

## Transcription conventions

Participant's pseudonym:	ABC
Brief pause	(.)
Long pause	(..) or (no. of seconds)
Overlapping	[or [] if end of overlap marked
Lengthening of sound:	te:xt
Cut-off:	-
Quiet:	°text°
Loud:	TEXT
Emphasis:	<u>text</u>
Rising intonation:	?
Falling intonation:	.
Comments:	((laughing))
Incomprehensible:	()
Uncertain or rough phonetic transcription:	(text)
Approximate translation in English:	<i>text under the original</i>



## Contributors

**Eulàlia Borràs** is an Associate Professor in the Department of English and Linguistics at the Universitat de Lleida and a member of the Research Centre for Teaching and Plurilingual Interaction (GREIP) at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Her research explores multilingual classroom management and relationships between university language policies and language use. She is also interested in plurilingual group work, inside and outside the classroom, as well as in multimodality.

**Victor Corona** is an Adjunct Lecturer in the Department of Language and Literature Education and Social Science Education at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and at the Université Paris VIII. He is a member of the Research Centre for Teaching and Plurilingual Interaction (GREIP) and of the Structures Formelles du Langage (SFL) research group. His research is related to linguistic ethnography in educational contexts, interactional linguistics, style, language contact and the construction of identity.

**Melinda Dooly** is a Professor in the Department of Language and Literature Education and Social Science Education at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, where she holds a Chair in Technology-mediated Language Teaching and Intercultural Education. She is also the principal investigator of the Research Centre for Teaching and Plurilingual Interaction (GREIP). Her research interests include technology-enhanced project-based language teaching and learning, category constructions of linguistic diversity and social inequalities in education policies.

**Margaret R. Hawkins** is a Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and in the PhD Program in Second Language Acquisition at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her work, centred on engaged scholarship around issues of equity and social justice, focuses on languages, literacies and learning in classroom, home and community-based settings in domestic and global contexts. Published work examines: classroom ecologies; families and schools; language teacher education; and new destination communities' responses to mobile populations. She currently explores semiotics and relations in transmodal communications. She received the Erwin Zolt Digital Literacy Gamechanger Award from the International Literacy Association (2019).

**Almudena Herrera** is a secondary school English teacher at Institut Can Periquet. She is also the author of published children's storybooks. She collaborates with the Research Centre for Teaching and Plurilingual Interaction (GREIP) at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. She has implemented different school projects to support students' meaningful learning and international exchanges.

**Júlia Llompart** is an Adjunct Lecturer in the Department of Language and Literature Education and Social Science Education at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and a member of the Research Centre for Teaching and Plurilingual Interaction (GREIP). Her research focuses on plurilingualism and inter- and intragenerational language transmission.

**Dolors Masats** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Language and Literature Education and Social Science Education at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and a member the Research Centre for Teaching and Plurilingual Interaction (GREIP). Her research interests revolve around conversation analysis applied to language learning and the design, implementation and assessment of curricular and classroom proposals, structured around plurilingual and interdisciplinary projects and tasks.

**Emilee Moore** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Language and Literature Education and Social Science Education at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and a member the Research Centre for Teaching and Plurilingual Interaction (GREIP). Her research is framed within the study of linguistic practices in multilingual and multicultural educational contexts from a perspective that integrates linguistic anthropology, interactional sociolinguistics and sociocultural learning theories.

**Andy Morodo** is an Adjunct Lecturer in the Department of Basic, Evolutionary and Educational Psychology at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and member of the Research Group on Identity and Teaching Strategies (SINTE-IdentitES). He is also co-founder and president of LèXtra! Cooperativa d'Educació i Lleure and a consultant for Fundació Autònoma Solidària (FAS). His research focuses on improving teaching and learning processes.

**Cèlia Pratginestós** is an Adjunct Lecturer at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and at EUNCET Business School. She is a member of the Research Centre for Teaching and Plurilingual Interaction (GREIP). Her research focuses on conversation analysis applied to language learning and the deployment of interactional competence in plurilingual peer interaction.

**Jorge Solans** is a secondary school English teacher at Institut Federica Montseny. He collaborates with the Research Centre for Teaching and Plurilingual Interaction (GREIP) at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. He has implemented different school projects to support students' meaningful learning and international exchanges.

**Claudia Vallejo** is an Adjunct Lecturer in the Department of Language and Literature Education and Social Science Education at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and a member of the Research Centre for Teaching and Plurilingual Interaction (GREIP). Her research focuses on the role of cultural and linguistic diversity in the academic trajectories of students from cultural and linguistic minorities, especially those considered at risk of school failure.

**Miaomiao Zhang** is a candidate in the PhD in Education at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. She has a postgraduate major in International Chinese Education and a dual master's degree in Teaching Chinese as a Second Language to Spanish Children from Zhengzhou University and the Comillas Pontifical University.



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